

No. 235 / SEPTEMBER 1992



sex, lies and global survival

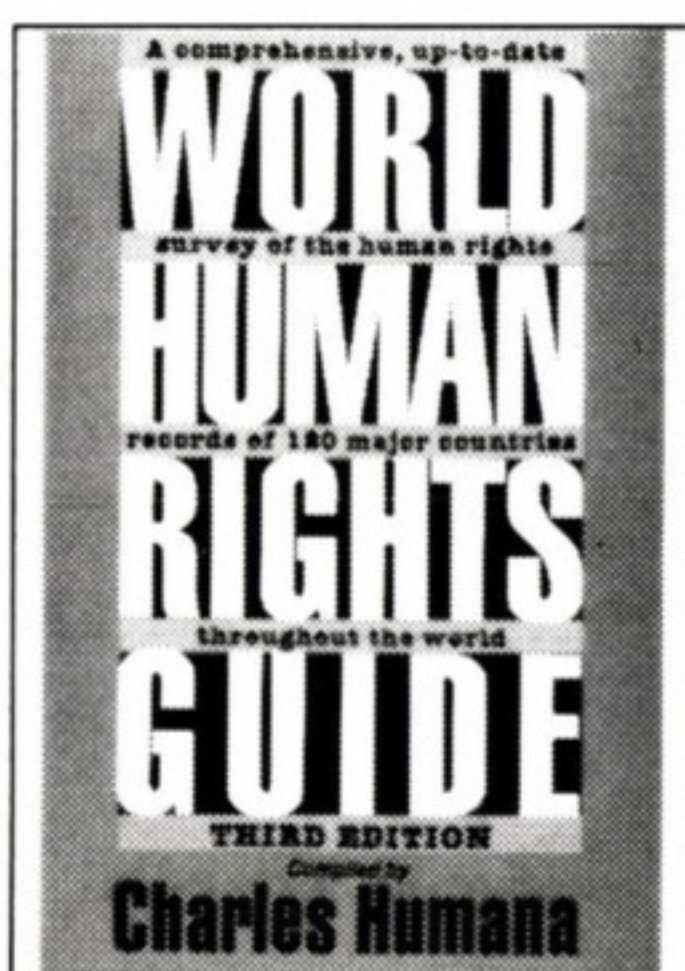
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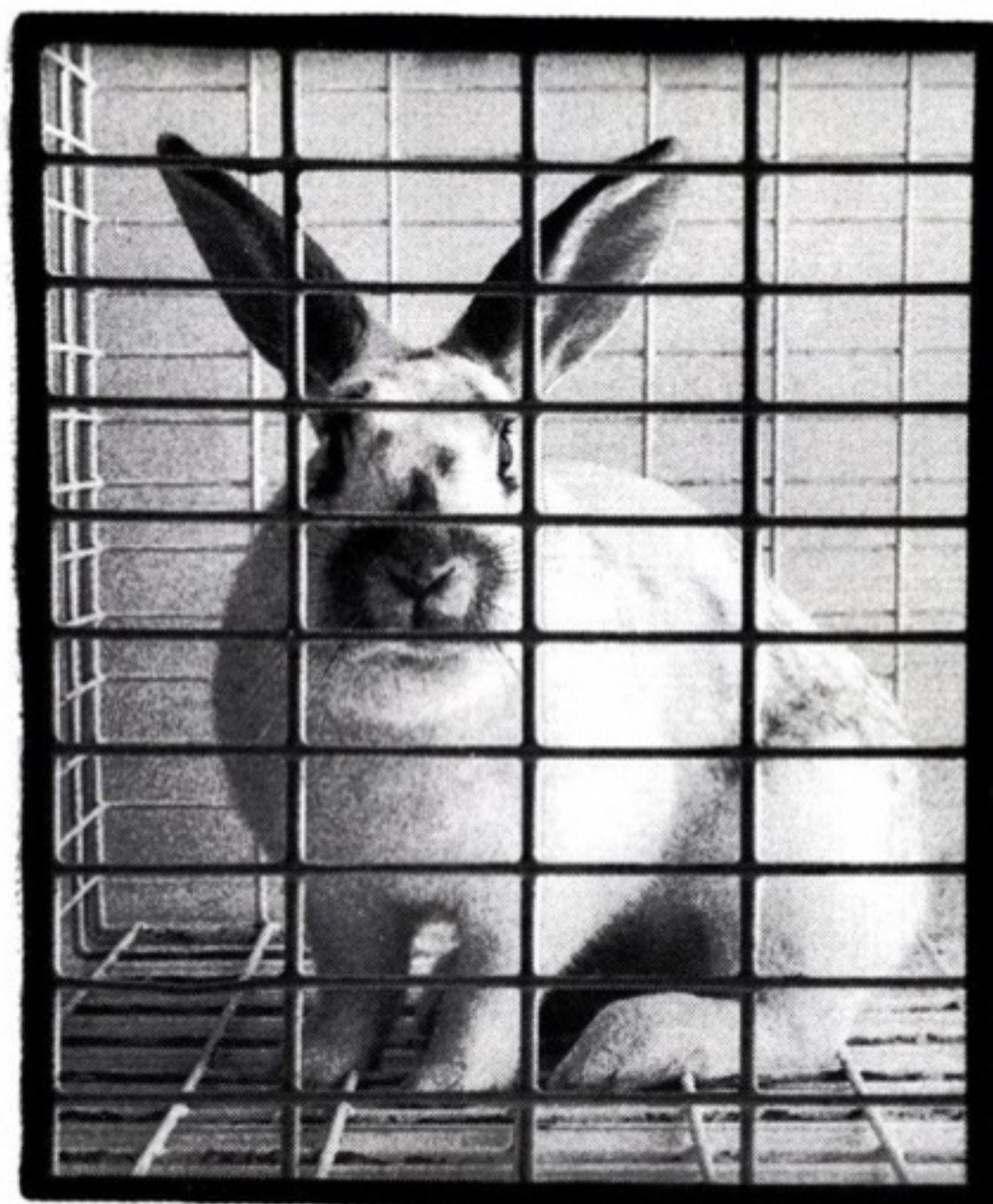
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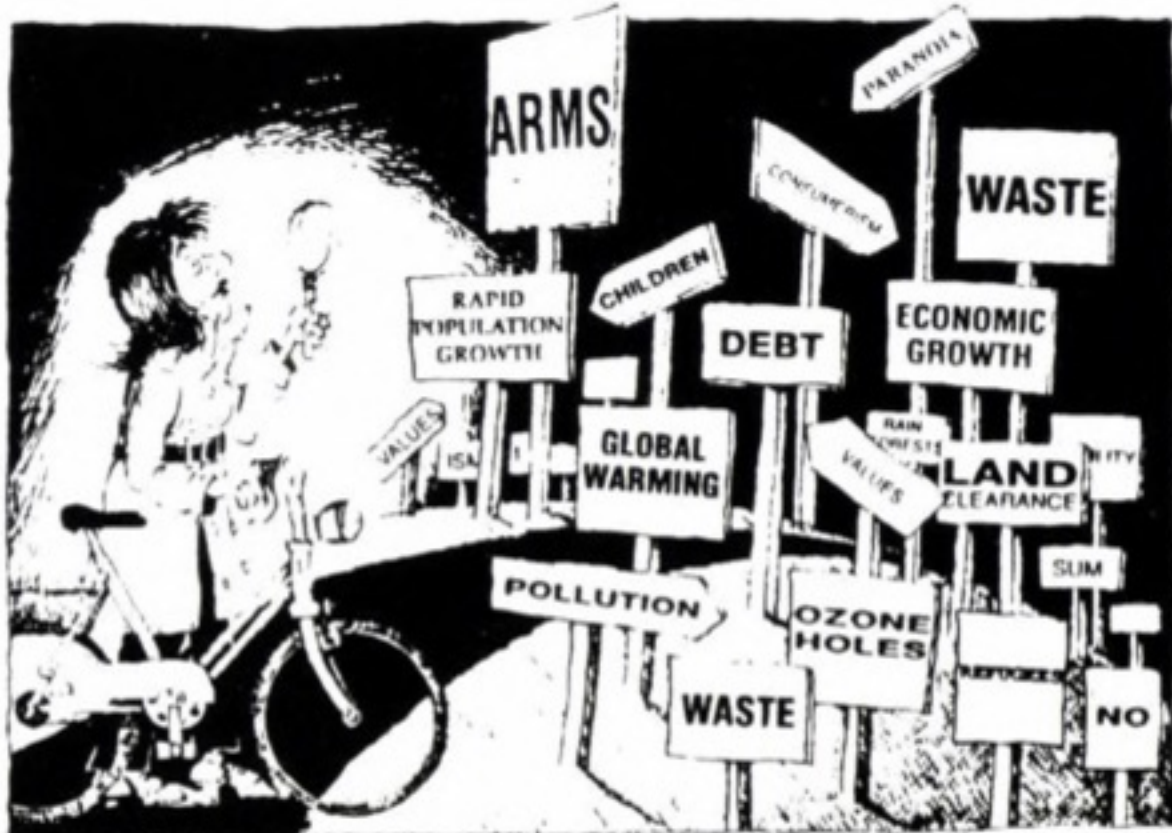
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THIS MONTH'S THEME

Population

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

SOMETIMES a piece of writing is just a job. You're not being asked to be a creative artist, only a professional stringer-together of sentences. And it's no good saying: 'I'm not in the mood.' You just have to stare out the white piece of paper, refuse to be intimidated, tell yourself sternly, 'It's only a thousand words' and get on with it. But sometimes what you write requires far more of you than that and the more demanding it is, the more captivating the process of writing can become. This magazine made me positively obsessive. Often I would vanish behind my word-processor after supper 'just to tidy up one paragraph' – and not reappear until six o'clock the following morning, tired but happy.

Obviously the intrinsic importance of the subject makes a great difference: you're never going to feel as involved if you are writing about something superficial. In the case of population and the environment,

you are grappling with matters of life and death and justice in relation to all of humankind – and the planet to boot. You can't get a subject much more serious than that. Not to mention urgent.

And all-encompassing. The more I listened and read, the more massive an issue it turned out to be, hooking into everything from economics to animal rights. What's more, it was emotionally loaded with every possible prejudice. Racism, sexism, classism, ageism, hatred of capitalism, ditto of socialism or of different religious faiths – and each of these ideological loads was nailed fiercely into place by powerful feelings masquerading as reasons. Which realization presented me with a challenge: could I let go of my own ready-made answers and risk seeing what might

emerge during the process?

So writing this issue had to become a genuine journey of discovery for me. And many of the themes I had intended to examine throughout the course of the magazine became compressed into just one part of it while other themes were left out altogether as new ideas unexpectedly elbowed them out of place.

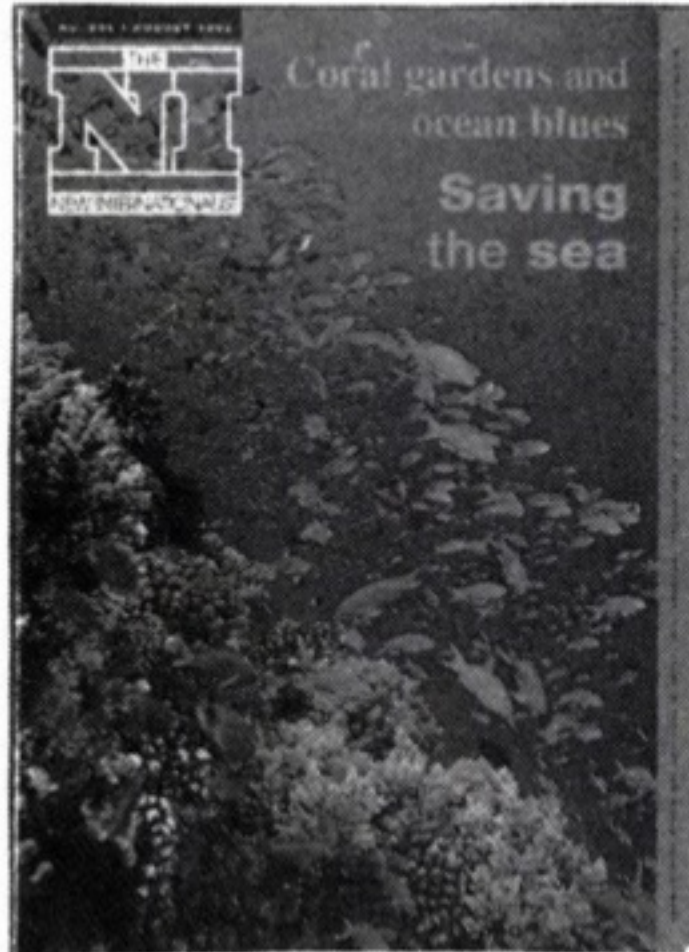
One risk I took, after much cowardly dithering, was to include an ancient fairytale – and eventually to include it with very little explanation as to its meaning. Indeed, new layers of its meaning have kept on emerging. Although the version offered here is lightened and abridged, I hope enough key moments are retained for it to reverberate in the semi-conscious. Many readers, I have no doubt, will hate this story and find it simply gruesome or baffling. Others, especially those who enjoy exercising their metaphorical imagination, may find the story echoes their experience as compellingly as it did mine.

Anuradha Vittachi

Anuradha Vittachi
 for the New Internationalist Co-operative

Where is Atlantis?

You did just enough to liven up the solid environmental stories in *Saving the Sea* (NI 234) and keep me reading – notably with Sharon Doubiago's so-far-over-the-top-that-you-can-only-



applaud prose poetry. Until the end, that is. I'm one of those strange beings who actually reads the magazine in the order you presumably intend it to be read. And by the end of this one I was starting to feel I knew enough about fishing to last me several lifetimes. Were there no other bases to touch? What about the Law of the Sea? Or islands like the Maldives being swamped by global warming? Or even the latest thinking about the location of Atlantis?

John Maiteland
Winnipeg, Canada

Tyranny of perfection

I think most people associate disability with powerlessness which they fear (*Disabled Lives* NI 233). Doctors have the power to kill fetuses they suspect of being imperfect and would-be parents place themselves in the hands of the medical profession because they have no experience of disability.

Termination of a pregnancy for suspected handicap can be very traumatic for the parents as can the battery of screening tests. If 'retrieved' the child may suffer from the negative attitude of the mother who has been mentally preparing for losing her baby.

How many crimes have been committed by disabled people?



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

How many wars have they started? Why this overpowering desire to rid the world of them?

Ann E Farmer
Woodford Green, UK

Pregnancy horror

I didn't know much about disabled people until your brilliant disability issue (NI 233). I couldn't believe that in parts of China people with developmental problems and other disabilities are not allowed to get married unless they are both sterilized. And imagine being the subject of a call-in radio show – as disabled woman Bree Walker was – just because you got pregnant.

Alice Watson (14)
Oxford, UK

Technology tightrope

Your development issue (*A Guide to the Ruins* NI 232) enlightens us with how little development has achieved and at what an exorbitant cost. But it is replete with innuendoes against technology. The art of civilization is to use technology

in such a way that more people can live more comfortably with the same natural resources. Thus the tirade against electricity is misleading. What are the alternatives? Oil or candlestick, charcoal or vegetable oil would all produce just as much devastation.

PN Mathur
Aberystwyth, Wales, UK

Suicidal solution

I utterly reject the sheer, unadulterated pessimism in the 'Development ended in Kuwait' chapter of NI 232. I don't reject any 'facts' about the conflict between North-South. It's just that with that sort of pessimism all one can do is commit suicide or stop reading.

David Somerville
Bradford, UK

Blanket statements

I find Sachs' (NI 232) blanket condemnation of all 'development' irritating in the extreme, as is his apparent assumption that there is a uniform 'Western' civilisation and attitude towards development. I

agree with his arguments almost entirely when applied to the dominant (and dominating) development ethics such as those portrayed starkly by Bush at the Earth Summit in Rio. But *not once* does he distinguish between this attitude and those working for environmental development (the management of habitats for the protection of species numbers and diversity) and cultural development (the reinforcement of tradition, skills, languages, customs and values), which is clearly contrary in most instances to the prevailing ethos of bigger companies, greater production and increasing technocracy.

Frank W Rennie
Isle of Lewis, Western Isles, UK

Gross omission

Thank you for your 'GNP Health Warning' (*Facts* NI 232). A further dimension that GNP fails to indicate is the internal distributions of GNP wealth: some countries with extremely low GNP, support extremely rich classes. To this extent, starkly contrasting countries in terms of GNP are often fundamentally similar.

David Cannon
London, UK

Media mess

Your outspoken editorial (NI 232) might also have mentioned the role of some sections of the media in the UK election which were largely to blame for focusing people's attention on taxation to the exclusion of all other considerations, and also of deliberately painting a false picture of Labour party policy. (Thanks to our electoral system they didn't have to worry about other opposition parties.)

Although I support Charter 88, I don't think one can rely on constitutional change as a path to social change. Indeed our rulers would far sooner concede a few crumbs of social change than move towards an electoral system that would permanently revoke their monopoly on power.

Simon Norton
Cambridge, UK

Shrunken statistics

Your eye-catching 'Hours for Hamburgers' graphic (*Updates* NI 232) is a powerful represen-

Delightful stretch

I take issue with David Pitt's criticism (*Letters* NI 233) of Wolfgang Sachs; without knowing anything of 'readability tests' I found Sachs' essays great. In this sound-bite era, when articles, interviews and letters to the press are all too often shortened or edited beyond recognition, thank you for giving someone with such thought-provoking ideas a free rein to express them at length. As for damning the essays for being pitched at 'higher education level', surely we NI readers can take or leave what we choose from the variety of information and styles on offer.

Jane Knott
Brussels, Belgium

I understand the articles - but some of the cartoons are a bit over my head



tation of the real impact on people of unfair trade. But was it really helpful or necessary to exaggerate the point by shrinking the height of the triangles representing Chicago and Tokyo, relative to the other cities? A quick application of ruler and calculator confirmed my suspicions. One millimetre represents two and a half minutes of labour for all the 'poor world' examples (and, oddly, Sweden) but for the rich West and Japan a millimetre represents five or six minutes' toil.

Richard Hellewell
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

Spotlighting racism

I found the letter from Felix Kuchler (*Letters NI 231*) most offensive. Is black always to be associated with pessimism? I live and work in Peru, one of the many countries abused and exploited by European 'discovery'. And here the descendants of black slaves are still among the most discriminated against, personifying the deep wounds that humanity inflicted upon itself in suggesting that one person's skin colour is better than another's.

Suzanne Ryder
Lima, Peru

Cuba connection

For over 20 years Cuba has developed a social framework that guarantees free education, low-priced housing and free medical care to all its citizens. Currently, however, the loss of its Eastern European trading partners and the strengthening of the 32-year-old US embargo, have dealt a devastating blow to the Cuban economy. Public services have been seriously undermined. There are huge shortages of medical supplies and food stocks are running low.

In view of the lack of any action taken by charity organizations in Cuba we have taken upon ourselves the task of co-ordinating a project of medication and basic food supplies. We are looking for sponsorship and letters can be forwarded by NI.

Louise Durkin and Salman Yunus,
Heriot Watt University,
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

LETTER from LAHORE

The burned bride

A young girl is only welcomed by her bridegroom's family in Pakistan if she can provide a generous dowry. And even this may not protect her. **Maria del Nevo** explains.

NOSHEEN was getting married and I'd been invited to visit her before the day to see her dowry. She led me into a room crammed with huge trunks and one bed where her many silks and jewels were laid out for me to admire.

I looked wide-eyed at the velvet boxes containing heavy gold necklaces and earrings, dripping with pearls and emeralds. I was dumbstruck by the quilts, blankets, sheets, dinner sets, crystal glasses and every kind of modern electrical appliance. In another room stood a huge double bed, a sofa set, dining table and chairs.

Nosheen's mother stood in the doorway, her face alight with pride. I asked Nosheen how her father could possibly have afforded

such lavish expense for I knew he was only earning Rs2,500 (\$100) per month and had a family of six to support.

'I collected most of this myself,' she said. 'I've worked for five years and bought it with my salary. My father borrowed to buy the rest.'

Shocked, I remembered a conversation when her father had expressed strong opposition to the dowry system. For this practice is the root of prejudice against girl children, the cause of endless poverty and debt, and incites terrible greed in the families of boy children.

Quickly, however, I realized that her father is locked into a cultural tradition which faces him with two options: debt or the shameful burden of a spinster daughter. Very few families in Pakistan manage to arrange marriages for daughters without providing dowries, for if the girl goes empty-handed to her marriage there is the constant fear that the in-laws will mistreat her.

Sending a daughter to her husband's family with a full dowry, wins respect for her from her in-laws and brings honour to her own family, even if they spend the rest of their lives repaying the debt. The dowry also pays the husband's family for the girl's keep. But the system has gone far beyond any traditional agreement between two families.

Farhat, a young girl in her early twenties, went to her husband's house with a dowry which left nothing out. Her in-laws welcomed the addition to their household and all the valuable items she brought with her. But after the birth of her

daughter, Farhat's married life took a turn for the worse. Javed, Farhat's husband, dreamed of going abroad, but needed money in order to fulfil his dream. His parents asked Farhat's family to give them money. They gave Rs20,000 (\$800), but Javed's parents demanded Rs30,000 (\$1,200) more, a sum which they could not afford.

One day, last August, neighbours heard terrified screams coming from the house. They banged on the doors but were told to mind their own

business by Farhat's sister-in-law, who promptly bolted the gates. As the screams continued a boy from the neighbourhood jumped the walls. He found Farhat in an undisturbed room, sitting on a stool. Ninety-

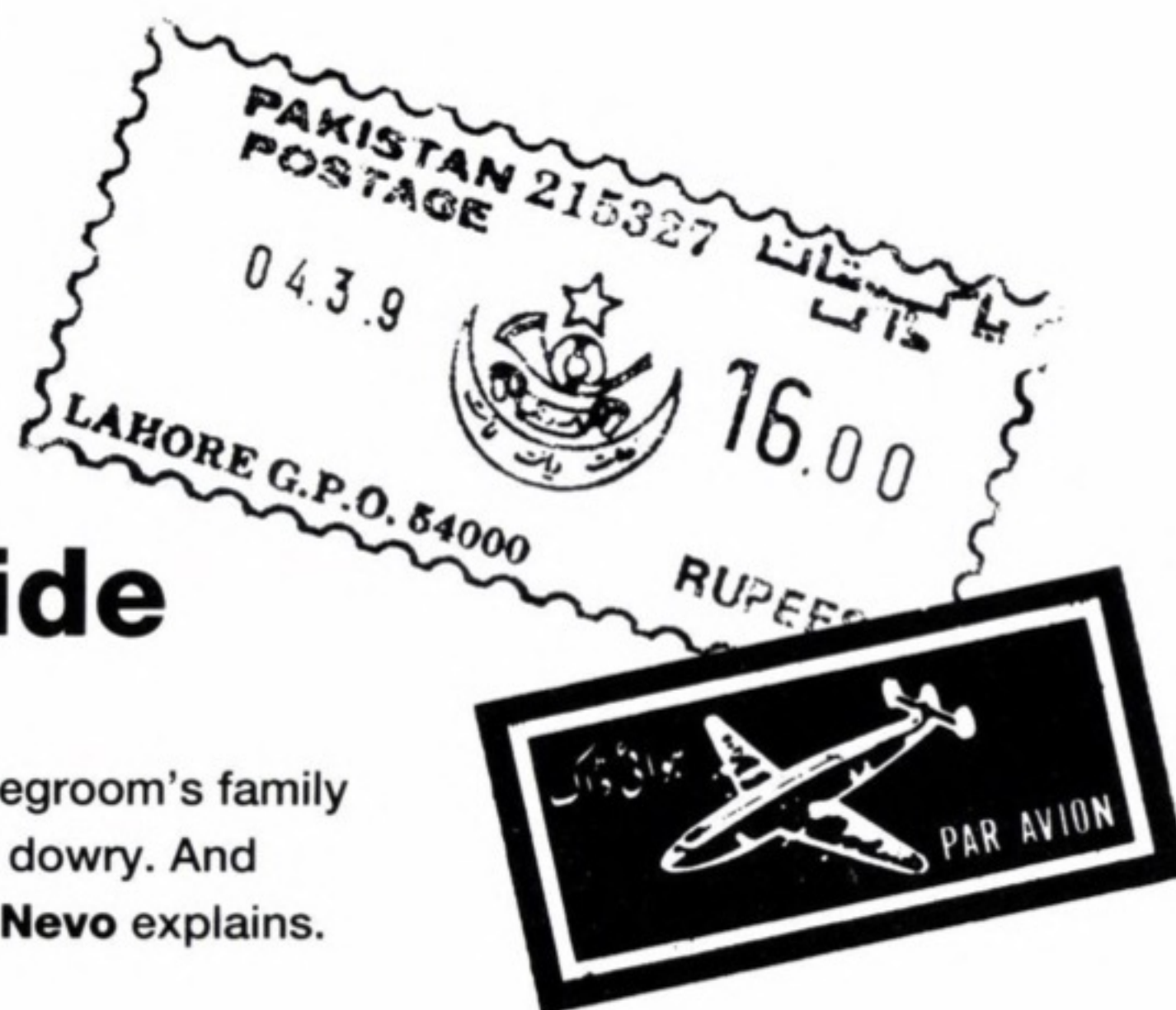
seven per cent of her body was covered in burns and as he carried her out of the house chunks of scorched flesh fell from her body. On her death bed, Farhat accused her husband and sister-in-law of throwing a burning oil stove at her.

In 1990 there were 1,800 deaths caused by burns from oil stoves, 85 per cent of the victims being females aged between 18 to 30. A more recent report claims that every six hours one Pakistani woman dies in this way.

Dowry deaths occur for many reasons. Some marriages are arranged with the girl's family promising to provide the dowry after the marriage. But when the time comes they can't provide all that they promised and the girl falls victim to the wrath of her in-laws. Alternatively the son may be married to a girl who can provide a full dowry so that his family can kill her, marry the boy again and so receive another dowry. Often, the in-laws feel that the dowry is not enough and after the marriage they demand more: when payment is denied they take the girls life.

I remember Nosheen, who I have not seen since her marriage, with that magnificent dowry which she courageously collected herself to save her father from debt and poverty. And I wonder how she is, knowing that all those jewels and gold, which were supposed to guarantee her safety, in fact exposed her to as much danger as if she went to her husband's house empty-handed. ■

Maria del Nevo is a former NI staff member who now lives and works in Lahore.



MIRIAM MCCURDY

sex, lies and global survival

AN **NI** GUIDE TO
GLOBAL POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT



'The earth is being murdered,' experts say. 'And population growth is the culprit.'
Our investigator **Anuradha Vittachi** has her doubts. And sure enough, when
she sets out in search of the truth she finds her trail
blighted by lies, alibis and false accusations.

POPULATION paranoia is rife. During the recent Earth Summit in Rio every newspaper I opened, every television news bulletin I watched, every journal that landed on my desk, seemed to have someone's views on population and its relationship to the environment. Most blamed the South, some blamed the North, some thought each was a bit to blame. Everyone had a particular axe to grind. Awash with contradictory information, it seemed to me high time to sort

out for myself some firm ground on which to stand.

It's an issue I have wanted to think out for many years. I knew myself to hold confused and contradictory responses. I couldn't help noticing my disapproving feelings when I heard of acquaintances being pregnant with their fifth or sixth child. These weren't villagers who needed to have many children for survival's sake. They were people who lived in affluent countries or were from the affluent classes

of the developing world. So what was their excuse? But then, why should they need an excuse?

I also believed, dissonantly, in the human right of every parent to choose if and when to have children. Did I now think that population growth was such a heavy-weight problem that it overrode the sanctity of this particular human right? Or was 'overpopulation' not really a problem at all, but merely an excuse by people who didn't want to give up their addiction to

over-consuming?

My own confusions were reflected in the conflicting views being offered to me. On April 30 this year, the UK's *Daily Mail* chose to report the UN's views on population in a front-page story under the sensationalist headline, 'The Human Time Bomb'. The story began:

The world is on the brink of a population catastrophe, a chilling United Nations report warned yesterday.

Unless immediate action is taken to control the spiralling numbers, the very future of humanity is at risk as the planet's resources are swamped. The growth will take place almost entirely in the Third World, where poverty is already rife.

So rapid population growth stood accused – apparently with UN authority – of being the potential murderer of all humanity. And it was firmly identified with the developing world and its poverty; population growth in the industrialized world was not presented as an issue.

Writer Gore Vidal put it like this: 'Think of the earth as a living organism that is being attacked by billions of bacteria whose numbers double every 40 years. Either the host dies, or the virus dies, or both die. That seems to be what we are faced with.'

But by no means all population experts agree. Dr Barry Commoner, US environmentalist, states firmly that: 'The theory that environmental degradation is largely due to population growth is not supported by the data.' And Edward Goldsmith, one of the founders of the ecology movement in the UK, told me categorically last week, 'Population is not the fundamental problem.'

Other experts have it both ways: they assert a belief in the human right of a parent to decide 'freely' how many children to have as long as the parent behaves 'responsibly'. But they don't say who has the right to decide the nature of that responsibility: the parent – or a coercive bureaucrat from a

Should we perceive these small children as the destroyers of the planet? 1

government or a birth control agency who thinks she or he knows how a parent should behave.

Why has population become such a hot issue? Now that an ecological crisis of global survival looms near, rising panic in the North is strengthening the arm of the anti-populationists – those who believe that reducing population growth as soon as possible is the solution to the world's problems. The further threat of a flood of refugees from the South is adding to that paranoia.



MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

Sarajevo? Iraq? No, It's Rio during the Earth Summit. The tanks are to protect the gathered politicians from the 'enemy' — poor people from the shantytowns.

Population growth in the South used to matter to us Northerners in a generalized but forgettable way. Now it matters to us in the North because it threatens our lifestyles, and maybe even our lives. We now care about alleviating poverty because we think, like Prince Charles, that poverty exacerbates population growth. Even World Bank experts are now urging more education for women because it has dawned on them that educating girls lowers population growth.

Does it really matter whether or not population is pinpointed as the fundamental problem? Yes – because if it turns out not to be the real source of the global ecological crisis, then as long as we are distracted by it the real culprit is free to escape.

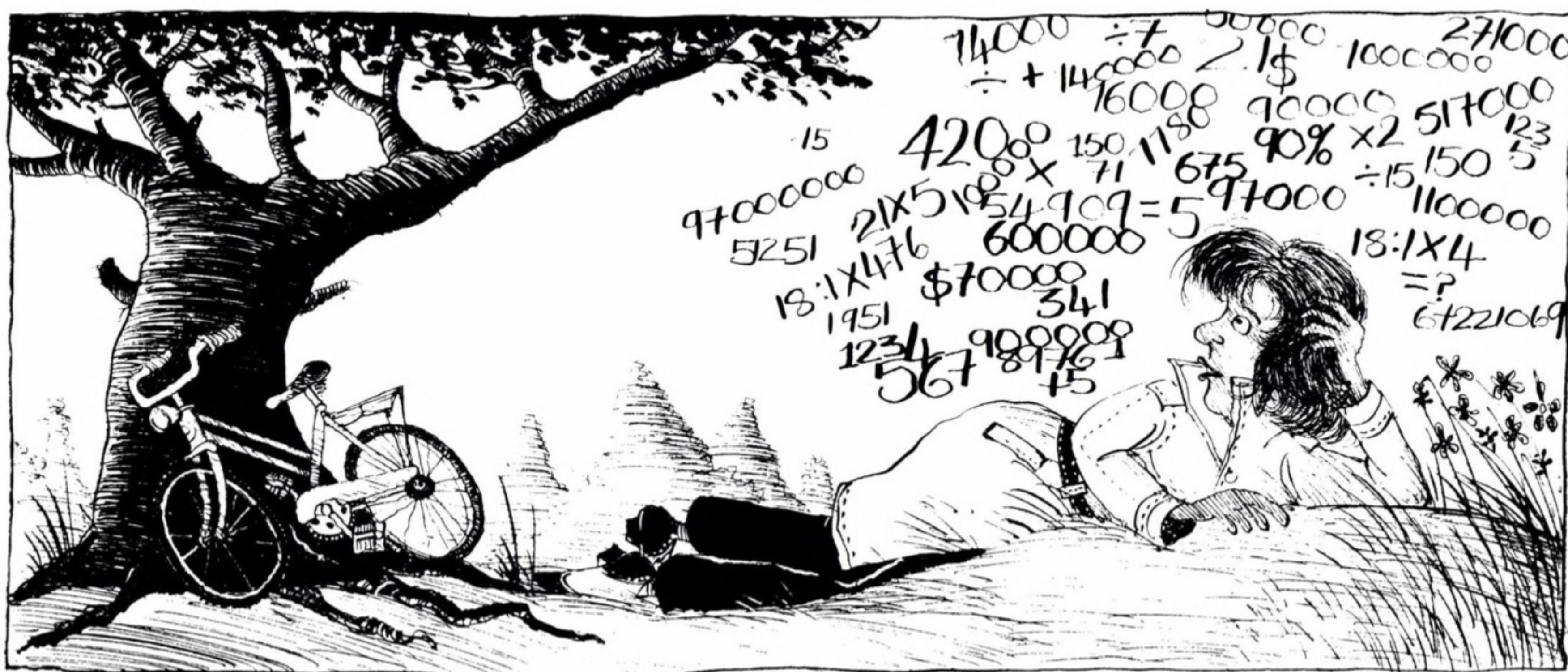
Finding the real culprit is not only a matter of practical urgency but of justice. Dr Maurice King, Professor in Public Health at the University of Leeds, recently advised against the introduction of public health measures like oral rehydration therapy (ORT). This is a simple concoction of salt, sugar and water used to save small children from dying of diarrhoea – and

diarrhoea is the biggest single killer of under-fives, causing the deaths of between four and five million small children each year. King's argument for denying the children this remedy was that they would 'increase the man-years of misery'.¹ In other words, we shouldn't offer these humanitarian remedies to save the lives of children in poor areas, for if they survived that would create more population growth, which in turn would bring about a quicker descent into ecological catastrophe.

Should we perceive these small children, then, as the destroyers of the planet? If King's accusation turns out to be wrong, the affluent in the North will have victimized these Southern children twice over: first by contributing to the poverty they are born into and second by wrongly representing them as the source of the environmental crisis.

And what we are dealing with here is not just a theoretical change of perception but a spur to policy changes that have life-and-death implications for millions of small girls and boys.

¹ *National Medical Journal of India*, Vol 4 No 4.



Our investigator is stopped in her tracks by a group of experts who insist: 'It's quite simple. The Earth is our resource bank. So more people must mean more consumption.' At which point a pungent rat suddenly crosses her path.

Looking up a back issue of **NI** showed me that the North consumes five-sixths of the resources that are used and the South makes do with the remaining one sixth.¹ And hold on – this doesn't mean that a person in the North consumes five times as much as a person in the South. 'The North' refers to a little over one billion people, and 'the South' to nearly four-and-a-half

This is really a remarkable ratio, now I come to stop and take it in instead of just reeling off the statistic. It means that 80 average Southerners are managing to live their lives consuming no more than my husband, my two children and I consume. So if how much we choose to consume of the earth's resources is what really matters, why all the fuss about population growth? The answer I have to face is that it is much less painful to tell someone else to stop having what they want (even if what they want is children, and that's all they have) than to face giving up some of the material goods we want. Especially when 'we' includes all of us in the North, not just the ostentatiously wealthy. We are not talking about giving up a mink-coat-and-Ferrari way of life. In terms of the global economy, almost everyone in the North is rich. As theologian Don Cupitt has pointed out, all of us live as, in the past, people imagined only gods could live, with the energy equivalent of hundreds of slaves available to us at the touch of an electric switch. All of us who consume so much will have

By the year 2050, the UN reckons the population in the South may double to nine billion people, while the North is expected to grow very little. This large population will have a powerful impact on the local environment, intensifying problems like water shortages, so population growth is an issue

that should not be ignored. Meanwhile the Northern population is expected to grow very little. If we stick to the 20:1 consumption ratio, this means that the North would still be consuming twice as much as the South.

The South's population would have to more than quadruple to reach 20 billion people before they consumed as much as a single billion people in the North. The key question must be: when does the UN expect that quadrupling of Southern population to happen?

The surprising answer is: probably never. The UN's projections suggest that the South's population will double or, pessimistically, may triple; but it is unlikely to quadruple. The size of the global population is expected to stabilize at anything from 11 to 14 billion people. Only one very gloomy forecast suggests that 20 billion might be a possibility.

I need to stop and drink this in: it is so different from what I had been expecting after listening to all the anti-populationist hype. If consumption rates stay constant, the South's consumption as a whole — despite a doubling or tripling of its population — will never catch up with the North's, much less overtake it.

And to this thought we should add another: this is despite the fact that the North consists of just 33 countries, while the South has 127.

So population size will probably never be as decisive as consumption. I wonder why I've never seen this calculated before, in all the mass of anti-population documentation that arrives. On second thoughts, I suppose that's like asking why conjurors want us to see only the cards they've laid out on the baize table and not the card they've slipped under their cuffs.

¶ All of us live as, in the past, people imagined only gods could live. ¶

But of course it is not only the rich who want to go on consuming more of the fruits of the Earth. Poorer people would like to join in. What if the poor became richer, and were able to consume more?

The reality is that the poor are becoming poorer. Agro-economist MS Swaminathan calculated that in 1889 the ratio of real income per person in Europe, compared with a person in China or India, was just 2:1. But a century later, in 1991, the ratio has become 70:1, he reckons.⁴ And the 1992 Human Development Report says: 'The absolute differences in per capita income between the top 20 per cent and bottom 20 per cent of world population,

expressed in 1989 US dollars, increased between 1960 and 1989 from \$1,864 to \$15,149. These disparities are reflected in real consumption levels.'

So the question 'what if the poor became richer' will remain academic, while the present world order dominates. The fiercer the flame lit by Northern industrialization, the starker the shadow it casts on Southern economies. For what fuels that Northern flame but human energies and planetary resources extracted from the South? To this process we must add debt repayments and boomerang aid. The injustices inherent in a deliberately skewed

global economic system (known risibly as a 'free' market) are well-known to NI readers, so I will restrict myself here to one memorable Latin American comment, courtesy of writer-diplomat Carlos Fuentes: 'Every Mexican baby is born owing \$1,000 to a Northern bank.'

1 *Environment and Development: Towards a Common Strategy for the South in the UNCED Negotiations and Beyond*, South Centre — the Follow-up Office of the South Commission, (Geneva, 1991). 2 Experts will endlessly argue about the exact ratios — I've heard them vary from 7:1 to as many as 30:1. It also depends on different definitions of 'North' and 'South'. But 20:1 will do for the general principle we're pursuing here. 3 *UNFPA State of World Population Report*, 1990. 4 *Environment and Development*, (Tyler Prize Speech, 1991).

Two motherhoods: the picture on the wall creates the dangerous illusion that Northern lifestyles are glamorous and desirable — not hopelessly unsustainable.



CORNELL CAPA / MAGNUM



Pylons on the march. Coal-fired power stations in Calcutta add to global warming.

Garbage galore

The trail becomes choked with rubbish and carbon monoxide fumes. Negotiating her bicycle through the debris our investigator detects a group of experts hurling garbage at each other. Between throws, one expounds: 'We humans use the earth as a dustbin. The South must slow down its population growth or the Earth is doomed!' Anuradha ponders this, then comes up with a more interesting suggestion...

ONCE UPON A TIME, back in the 1970s, when people used to wonder whether population was a problem or not, the worry focused mostly on consumption-levels. But environmental fears of the 1980s centred on pollution – especially after the recognition of the ozone hole. Widespread fears about global warming added to this anxiety about waste.

Some discomfiting facts emerged. A survey by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of 20 industrialized countries found that municipal and industrial waste amounted to an average of some 1.6 tons per person each year – approximately 10 times the level per person in developing countries.

Sir Crispen Tickell, Chair of the Climate Institute, states quite clearly:

'Problems of the environment are not, as many like to think, a problem of the poor: they are substantially a problem of the rich... The primary responsibility for [the] accumulating changes in the environment rests directly or indirectly with the industrialized countries. To take one example, over 70 per cent of current carbon emissions come from them – and 23 per cent from the US alone.'

The United Nations confirms that the industrialized countries are 'overwhelmingly responsible for damage to the ozone layer and acidification, as well as for roughly two-thirds of global warming.'

What's more, people in the North also persist in choosing the more wasteful option even when a less wasteful option is available. According to Barry Commoner: 'The richer the country, the more natural

products – soap, wood, leather, cotton, paper – are replaced by synthetic petrochemical products. In agriculture, organic fertilizers have been displaced by chemical ones, and natural methods of pest control, such as crop rotation, have been replaced by pesticides. In transportation, convenient truck freight is being favoured over less polluting rail freight. In commerce, reusable goods have been replaced by throw-aways such as plastics which will be around 100 years from now – and longer.'

Flexible control is what we gain. But how often am I conscious of the enormous ecological consequences I set in train? How often do I weigh them against the trivial advantages I have gained? And how much information am I given to enable me to make these choices well? Because of our thoughtlessness, the small population in the

North creates far more environmental damage than the large population in the South.

What if the South followed the North's example? If the South chose to go full-tilt down the Northern economic road, building highly polluting factories, making CFC-ridden refrigerators, surely then the population numbers in the South would start to count. Imagine if everyone in China wanted a refrigerator...

We know what happened. Between 1981-1986 the proportion of Beijing households with a refrigerator leapt from two per cent to sixty-two per cent. Through carelessness an energy-hungry design was chosen — thereby committing China to wasting millions of dollars of electricity. And this energy bill can easily be blamed on the number of consumers rather than on a bad choice of design.

Refrigerators could also be designed to stop them spewing CFCs. And if technologies were stripped of these polluting elements then population would be irrelevant as a factor in global pollution.

In fact, if a government of a developing country fiercely curbs population growth and enables its people to have a 'higher standard of living' — in the sense of buying more high-pollution consumer goods — this is likely to increase rather than reduce the country's pollution output.

And yet many population experts still cling to the idea that human numbers are the most decisive factor in increasing pollution. Some lazily list large population figures followed by descriptions of large environmental hazards, cavalierly implying that the first 'obviously' causes the other.

Sometimes these experts will acknowl-



IPAT-omania

Experts have come up with a number of equations for examining the impact people have on the environment. The most common one is called IPAT and it goes like this:

$$I = P \times A \times T$$

'I' stands for the 'Impact on the environment'. 'P' stands for 'Population'. This is multiplied by 'A' — the level of 'Affluence'. It is multiplied again by 'T' — which stands for 'Technology', as some technologies are more environmentally damaging than others.

What it means is that the environmental impact can be increased by multiplying any of these factors: Population, Affluence or Technology.

Northern population experts often emphasize the Population factor — and downplay Affluence and Technology.

And the IPAT formula leaves out many other important factors which also impact on the environment — like the unequal global economic system.

KORKY PAUL

edge in passing that consumption and technology are complicating elements — but little more than that. And in one UN report, we are told that we should choose to lower population because it is less 'painful' than reducing polluting technology, even by five per cent.

This is very odd. First of all, it doesn't even mention the possibility of us lowering consumption. Second, it says that the benefits of reducing technology would soon be wiped out by population growth anyway. But it would be extremely easy for me to lower my consumption and technology levels by five per cent — cutting down on animal-based foods would be enough — though this the report dismisses as 'painful'.

Third, and oddest of all, it doesn't find 'painful' the prospect of lowering population. I wonder why. It is not implying, is it, that persuading poor people to have fewer children causes less pain than persuading rich people to buy fewer luxuries? If I were a woman who had almost nothing in my life except the hopes I placed in my children, I would find it very painful if a woman who had everything roared up to me in her gas-guzzler (as, regrettably, they do) to tell me I should have no more than one child for the sake of the planet.

If we insist on lowering population as the way forward, then logically we should begin by lowering population in the North, since an average child in the North will consume 20 times as much and pollute 10 times as much as a child in the South. Perhaps several households in the North could share just one child between them... I'm not being serious. But if we don't want to be told to have fewer children, we must,

Cars, cows and chainsaws; the three c's threatening the environment. These cars have been dumped in the countryside near Melbourne.



MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

‘If we insist on lowering population, then logically we should begin with the North.’

ethically, cut down our super-luxury-level consumption and pollution before preaching population reduction to anyone else.

The North has margin enough to make painless cuts. According to Alternative Nobel laureate Amory Lovins, 'The energy wasted in the US today costs ... more than the entire \$9,000-a-second military budget'.³

The South, which is not yet as enmeshed in dirty technology as the North, has an ideal opportunity to learn from the North's mistakes and go straight for clean-tech. Why suffer through a period of 'dark,

satanic mills'? Lovins believes that poor countries by using energy efficiency methods could fuel their economic growth tenfold and yet use no more energy. And, of course, the North should follow suit.

The scale of the North's fossil fuel mess took me by surprise. Just listen to this: to stabilize the global climate, a UK citizen like myself would have to reduce my carbon dioxide emissions by 92 per cent.⁴

But will the North bite the bullet and stop making so much mess? The resistance is formidable. For example, the Audubon Society says: 'It would be foolish and risky for mankind [sic] to count on expensive, untested "future" technology to solve problems when we can prudently and inexpensively address the problem of human numbers with simple tools.'⁵ They mean contraceptives. The same group produces the weirdest argument of all for focusing on population control: 'It is also one of the

solutions with the most affordable price tag.' So we should compromise the human right of people in the South to choose how many children to have rather than clean up our act in the North – because it is cheaper?

Even if it were, it is pretty steep to argue that we should be allowed to spew CO₂ or CFCs into the stratosphere while insisting that others should forgo the fundamental human right to choose how many children to have.

But it isn't cheaper. As demographer Basia Zaba explains, to dish out contraception with no health care backup may be cheap but is ineffective; to do the job properly is not cheap. It certainly can't be cheaper than saving money by saving energy. ■

1 Crispin Tickell, *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*, 1992 Vol 17 No.1 2 UNFPA *State of the World Report*, 1990. 3 Amory Lovins, *Energy, People and Industrialization*. 4 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 5 Audubon Society, *Why Population Matters*, 1991.

Carbon monoxide rules OK in Houston, Texas.

The lie of the land

Further along the trail our tireless investigator catches up with a family of peasants. 'We're looking for a piece of land to clear and cultivate,' they wearily explain.

CLEARING space for human habitation results in environmental problems like deforestation, desertification and the loss of other species. Even people who concede that pollution and consumption may be mostly the fault of the rich often believe that land clearance really is the fault of rapid population growth among the poor.

The usual story told in the North is that if rural parents have several children, they must divide up the land into pieces too small to be worth having when they want to pass it on to the next generation. So some of the younger generation move on to clear more land. And since there isn't any good land left, they farm hillsides where the topsoil erodes easily and washes away. Or they raze forests, releasing greenhouse gases through forest fires – and also helping to cause climate change through eradicating the trees

'An area of farmland the size of India lies uncultivated in Brazil because its owners treat it as financial investment.'

that are the lungs of the Earth.

I've always found this story rather strange. According to the United Nations Population Fund, there is no global shortage of land capable of growing food even for a population of 14 billion people. So why is there so little arable land left? Latin America, for example, is huge and its population is only around half a billion people.

Environmental activist George Monbiot describes an area of farmland the size of India that lies uncultivated in Brazil because its owners treat it as financial investment, while 20 million rural peasants wander landless. Brazil's richest one per cent, he estimates, own 15 times as much land as the poorest 56 per cent of Brazilian farmers put



ELLIOT ERWIN / MAGNUM

together. In the Philippines, agribusinesses producing sugar, cotton and pineapples for the North have pushed 12 million settlers into lowland forests; the forests' indigenous peoples are in turn being driven into water-sheds. And in Kenya, he says, President Daniel arap Moi's associates are rewarded with ex-colonial settler estates of up to 1.5 million acres, obliging the poor to trample the savannahs that are left.¹

These are only a few examples of what is happening throughout Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia. What they show is that the lack of land has less to do with population-pressure than with market-pressure. The land is being hoarded by the rich – and the poor simply can't afford to negotiate for it. In Guatemala, for example, just two per cent of the population own

two-thirds of the land.

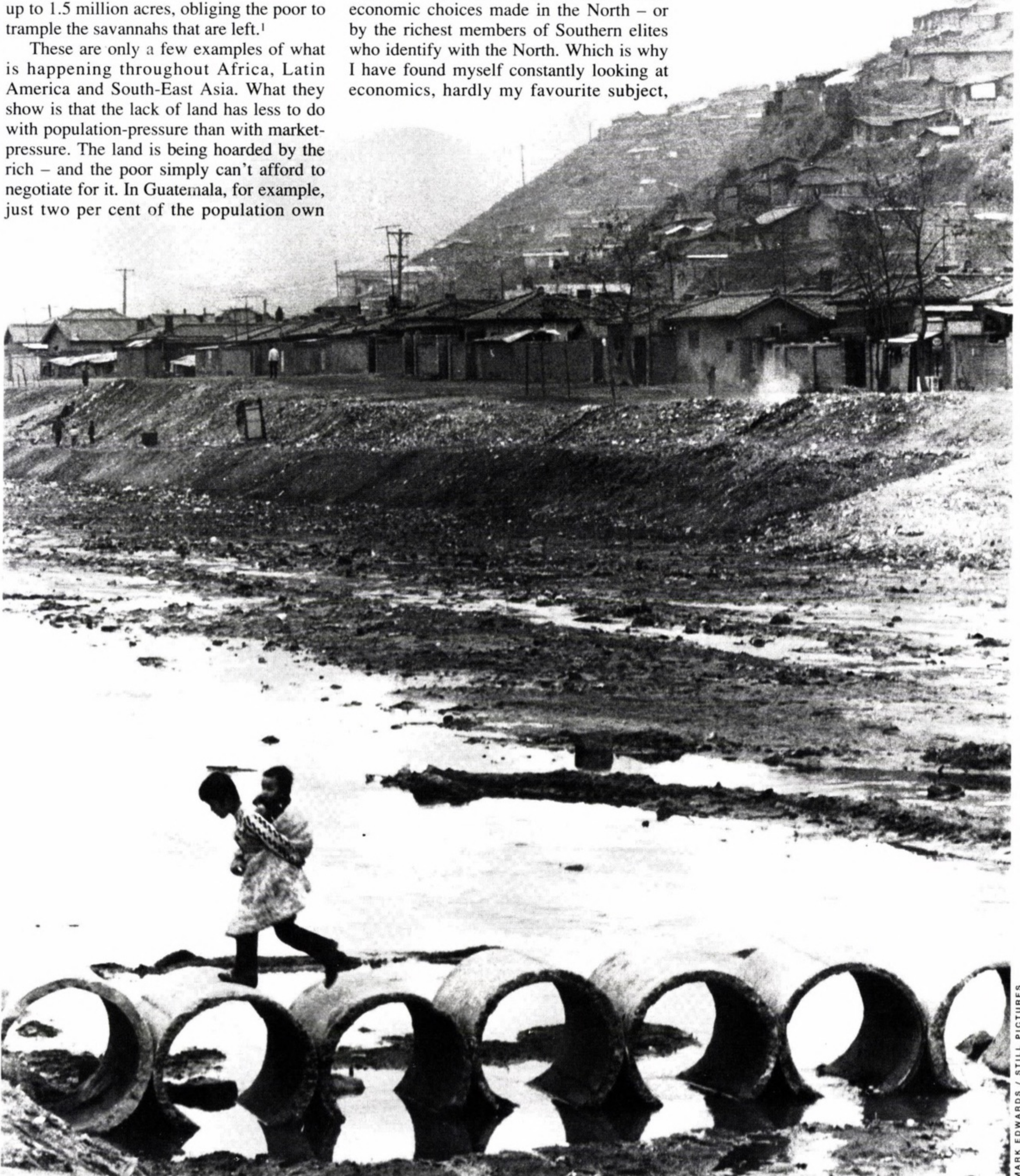
It's time to sum up what I've discovered so far. The United Nations Population Fund's report on the environment says that consumption, pollution and land clearance are the three main ways in which humans impact on the environment. But the major responsibility for all these seems to lie with economic choices made in the North – or by the richest members of Southern elites who identify with the North. Which is why I have found myself constantly looking at economics, hardly my favourite subject,

rather than at people, whom I much prefer.

So who is the main culprit when it comes to the global environmental crisis? Is it us, the rich consumers?

Not exactly....

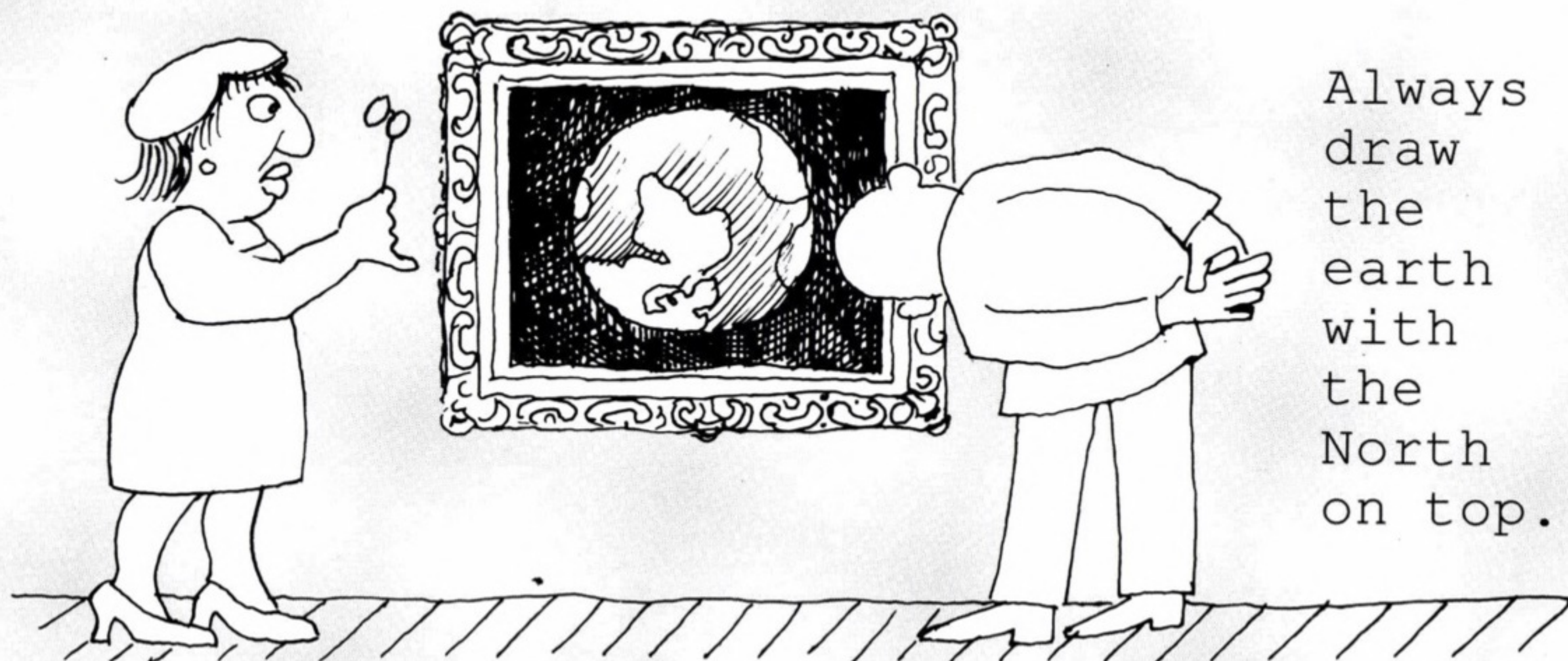
¹ George Monbiot, *Oxfam/Guardian Supplement*, (June 1992.).



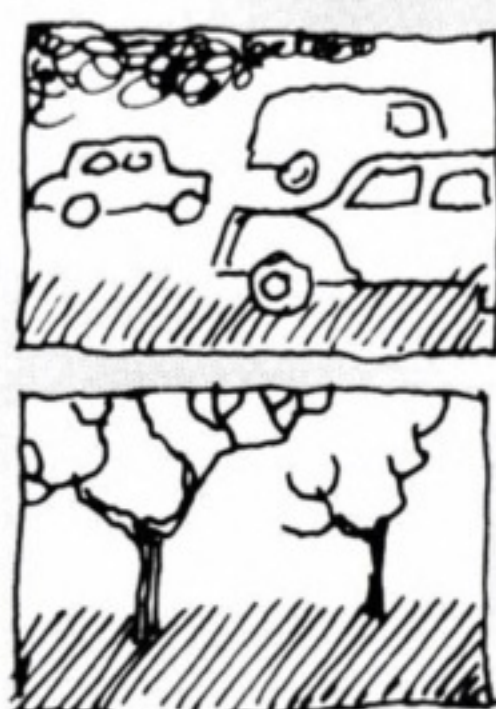
MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

PRESENTING

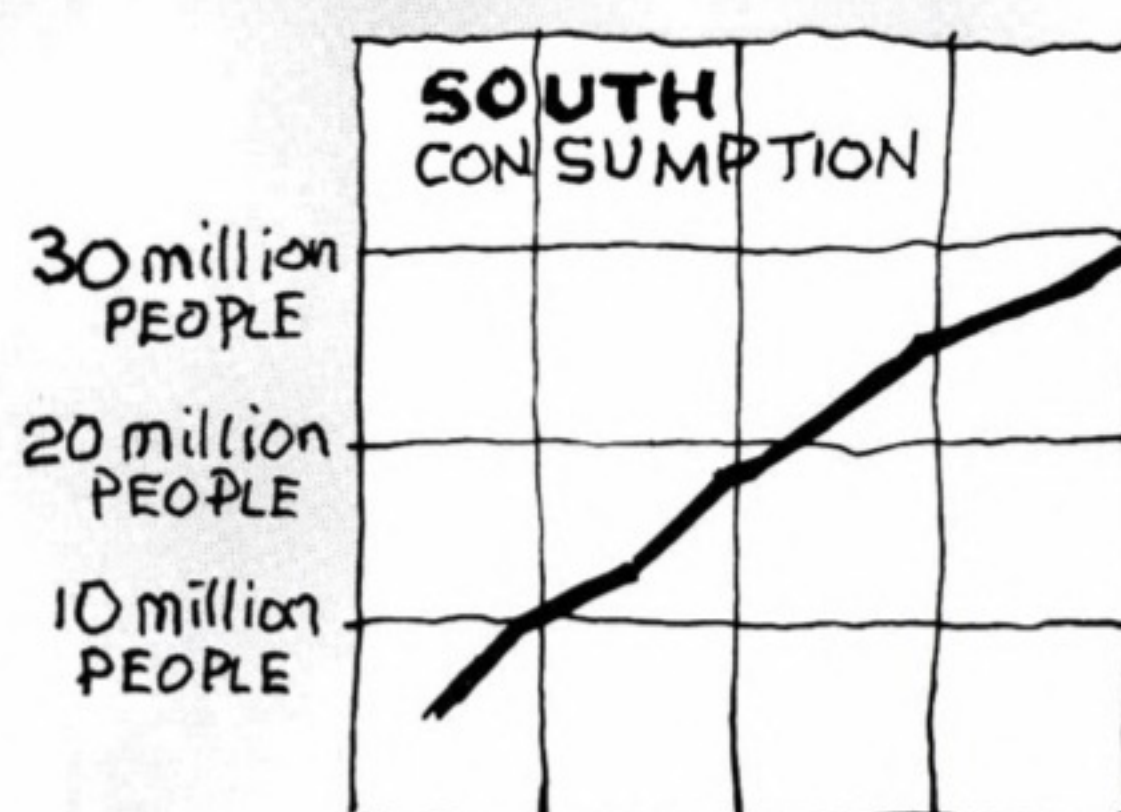
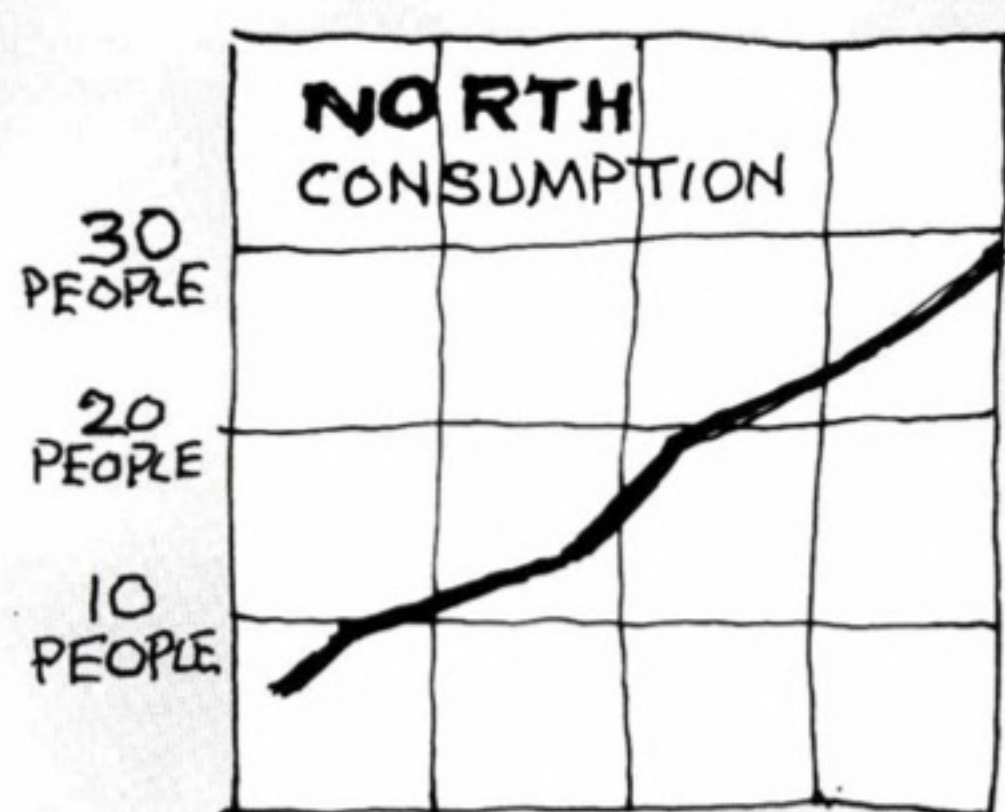
How to keep



If forced to admit the North's responsibility for the world's environmental mess concede magnanimously and at once. Then follow up smartly with a sentence starting with the word 'population', as



in: "Of course Northern industry creates acid rain. Population and pollution are ecology's biggest problems."



Always use different scales when drawing graphs that compare the North's and the South's responsibility for environmental damage, to make the South's fault look relatively bigger, and the North's relatively smaller, than it really is.

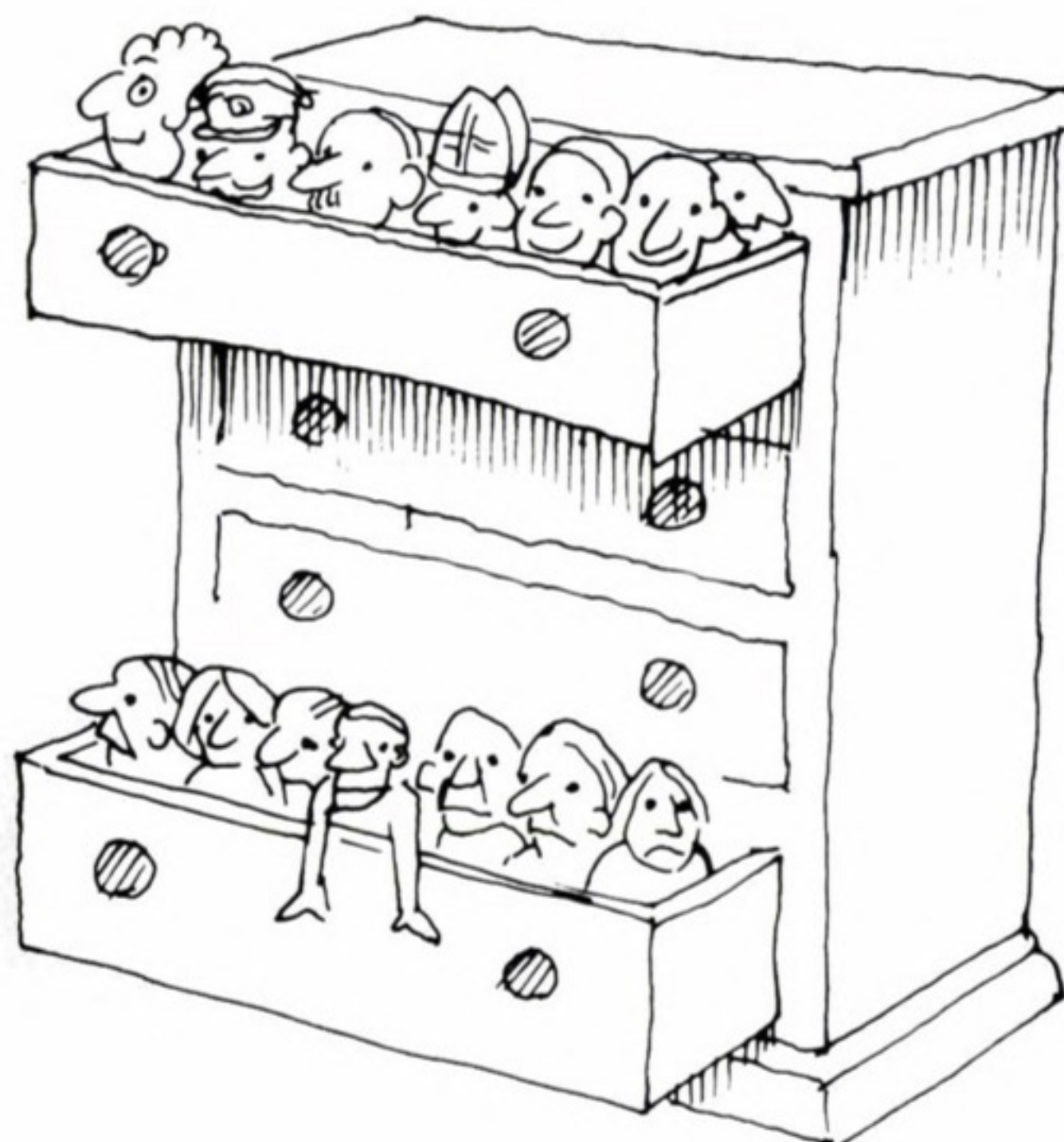
POPULATION

the North on top



Always talk about the North and South as though they were equal halves. For example, talk about 80% of the rain forests being cut down by people in the South as if they are entitled to cut down only 50%.

Always refer to the rich as "top" people as in "the top billion". The poorest people are of course the bottom billion.



Stress that the population of the United States is 0.25 billion. But in terms of ecological damage it is 12.5 billion – if we take the average Indian's consumption as the norm. This is because the average American consumes 50 times as much as the average Indian.





Whodunnit?

Who is murdering the earth? It's time for our investigator to ponder the evidence — and bring charges against the two most flagrant culprits.

LET'S look at some countries where eco-systems have been pulverized: Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Mozambique.

The kind of environmental degradation from which these countries suffer has little to do with rapid population growth. What it has got to do with is the military.

In 1989 Paul Shaw, UN advisor on population and development, wrote: 'No amount of deforestation in Brazil, desertification in the Sahel, or water pollution in the Nile can compare with the cumulative effects of war.'¹ The Allied bombardment

of the Gulf and Saddam Hussein's oil fires leave no doubt that Shaw has got it right.

Apart from the direct damage to land and air, war destroys the environment because it destabilizes traditional communities. Refugees flee for their lives to settle as best they can on fragile soils that cannot support unexpected cultivation. As usual, 'people-pressure' gets the blame for the damage to the soil, not the war-makers who cause the flight.

Between 1955 and 1985, Africa experienced more than 200 attempted coups d'état. Such conflicts continuously disrupt agriculture. More than eight million peas-

ants have fled their villages to escape terror and violence in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, Sudan and Uganda. This chaos has upset transport and marketing, suspended the maintenance of irrigation and land systems, and forced people to migrate to places that cannot possibly sustain large populations.

In the past 40 'years of peace' there have been some 125 wars fought on Southern soil.² Not all these conflicts begin and end with local politics: parts of Africa have been devastated by the superpowers fighting through the medium of local politicians. Now that the US has won, perhaps

the coup-count will slow down.

Even when they are not political battles on behalf of Northern powers, they hugely benefit the North – for that is the home of the arms merchants. Four out of the five largest arms dealers in the world are Northern powers. All four – the US, USSR, UK, and France – are members of the UN's Security Council. When it comes to setting the fashion for armaments-consumption, they call the shots.

With the thawing of the Cold War, Northern arms manufacturers like British Aerospace, Aerospatiale (France) and McDonnell-Douglas (US) are wooing the governments of the South at lavish arms fairs like the Paris Airshow – with the active support of their own governments. A senior Aerospatiale official commiserated with the UK when Mrs Thatcher left ministerial office: 'You have lost your best salesman.'

The declared global trade in 1990 was some 21 billion dollars of which the South bought 60 per cent – so yet another huge tranche of funds shifts from South to North, lessening the South's capacity to look after the more vulnerable of its people.³ In this way the poorer countries are devastated by the global war machine both

(TNCs) also play a major role. TNCs are massive polluters, directly responsible for 40 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas problem.

Their power is growing. The world's largest 500 companies now control at least 70 per cent of world trade, 80 per cent of foreign investment and 30 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product. One family-owned corporation, Cargill, accounts for 60 per cent of the cereals traded on the world market.⁴

As big business profits prosper the life of the planet and its poorer people ebbs away. TNCs use their muscle to force down prices for Southern commodities. Rice, coffee, cocoa, sugar and cotton were

on average 20 per cent cheaper in 1989 than in 1980.

Naturally, rural people in these low-income – no, lowered-income – countries cannot compete in the market-place for good land. And so rural people move to the hillsides or to shanty-towns, and population pressure is blamed when the blame should be placed on market pressure.

If we are sincere about wanting rural people to stop cutting down trees we should remember how desperate developing countries are to get rid of their foreign debts. Selling timber is a fast way to make a buck, and bucks are in short supply as Northern banks insist on the debt being repaid in Northern, not in local, currency.

Military 'success' means death. The Jolly Roger — the skull and crossbones — is the symbol of a naval victory. Here, with the crossbones adapted to torpedoes, it is flown by the British hunter-killer submarine HMS Conqueror after it sank Argentine cruiser General Belgrano. Over 300 men lost their lives.

Every Mexican baby is born owing \$1,000 to a Northern bank . . . It's the \$1,000 — not the baby — that is causing the environmental headache

during wartime, when their environment is wrecked, as well as during peacetime, when they channel their national income towards stocking up on more arms. The addiction to this particular form of Northern technology slides the South into more environmental unsustainability.

Behind the public scenes are the arms traders who actually strike the deals between the Northern manufacturers and the Southern defence ministries that are their customers. The victims of this sinister triangle include 22 million people who have died in wars in the South in the past 40 years.

If we look closer we can also see tens of millions more victims, families living diminished and uprooted lives. If we look more closely still, we can see the war-torn body of the planet itself. But the perpetrators of eco-death remain camera-shy.

The crowning irony is that all this planetary and human misery has been inflicted in the name of 'freedom' and 'security'.

But military interests are not doing all the damage. Other forms of big business – especially transnational corporations



EUGENE RICHARDS/MAGNUM

Remember Fuentes' Mexican baby, born owing \$1,000 to a Northern bank? It is the \$1,000 rather than the baby that is causing the environmental headache.

So when the television-news reporters next tell me, in horrified and breathless tones, that the slashing and burning poor have pushed their way into the rainforest, I must remember what they have failed to remind me of: who pushes the poor who push into the forest. Just how much choice do these lowered-income farmers have?

And, for that matter, how much actual choice do we – the high-consuming, high-polluters – have? We don't start our day intending to act anti-environmentally. We 'choose' to consume and waste only in a very superficial sense, since we make these choices based on very little information. Our conscious intention is only to make ourselves, or the people we provide for, healthier or happier in some way. We have very little reliable knowledge about how seriously our consumerist behaviour impacts upon the planet.

But each of us becomes a sorcerer's apprentice for the TNCs, helping them to abuse the environment when we succumb to their enchantments. Each purchase that we make gives them another mini-boost of

energy. I wouldn't choose to wear Lycra or drink Costa Rican coffee – nor come across coffee as a drink at all – if it were not for the consumer choices made for me by anonymous men and women running TNCs.

I am dazzled, as I am meant to be, by their calculated displays in shop-windows and supermarkets. I am seduced by the shifting images they place before my eyes on television screens, even when I know – and I know they know I know – that advertisements are deliberately-created illusions. I can see in the mirror that I am being tricked, and in the opposite mirror I can see myself seeing myself being tricked... but I allow myself to be tricked anyway, like a child willingly entranced by a stage conjuror.

And somehow, I still tell myself that my 'choices' as a consumer express my individuality. I swallow the advertisers' shameless lie that I can do this by buying their mass-produced goods. But where, really, is my own choice?

We shouldn't be surprised that individual consumers are so caught in the TNCs' clutches. They can even hold the most powerful governments to ransom. At the Earth Summit's preparatory meeting in New York in April, they managed to get deleted from the Rio discussions all references to the

impact of trade on the environment.

Once a country is caught in these macro-economic spells, it is easy to see how 'the Earth is being stripped naked, abused, wounded, and left bleeding to death!' as Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai puts it.

Seeing some of these forces hidden behind the surface helps explain another mystery: why the rural people do not look after the land and the forests in the sustainable ways so long embedded in their cultures. They haven't just forgotten these sustainable practices or stopped caring about them.

The brutal reality is that rural people are reluctant to invest in long-term land management such as tree-planting and terracing if their investments are likely to be expropriated by big farmers. 'Instead,' says environmental campaigner George Monbiot, 'they will plant crops which extract the maximum from the soil in the shortest amount of time, even if this results in the destruction of the land and its wildlife.'

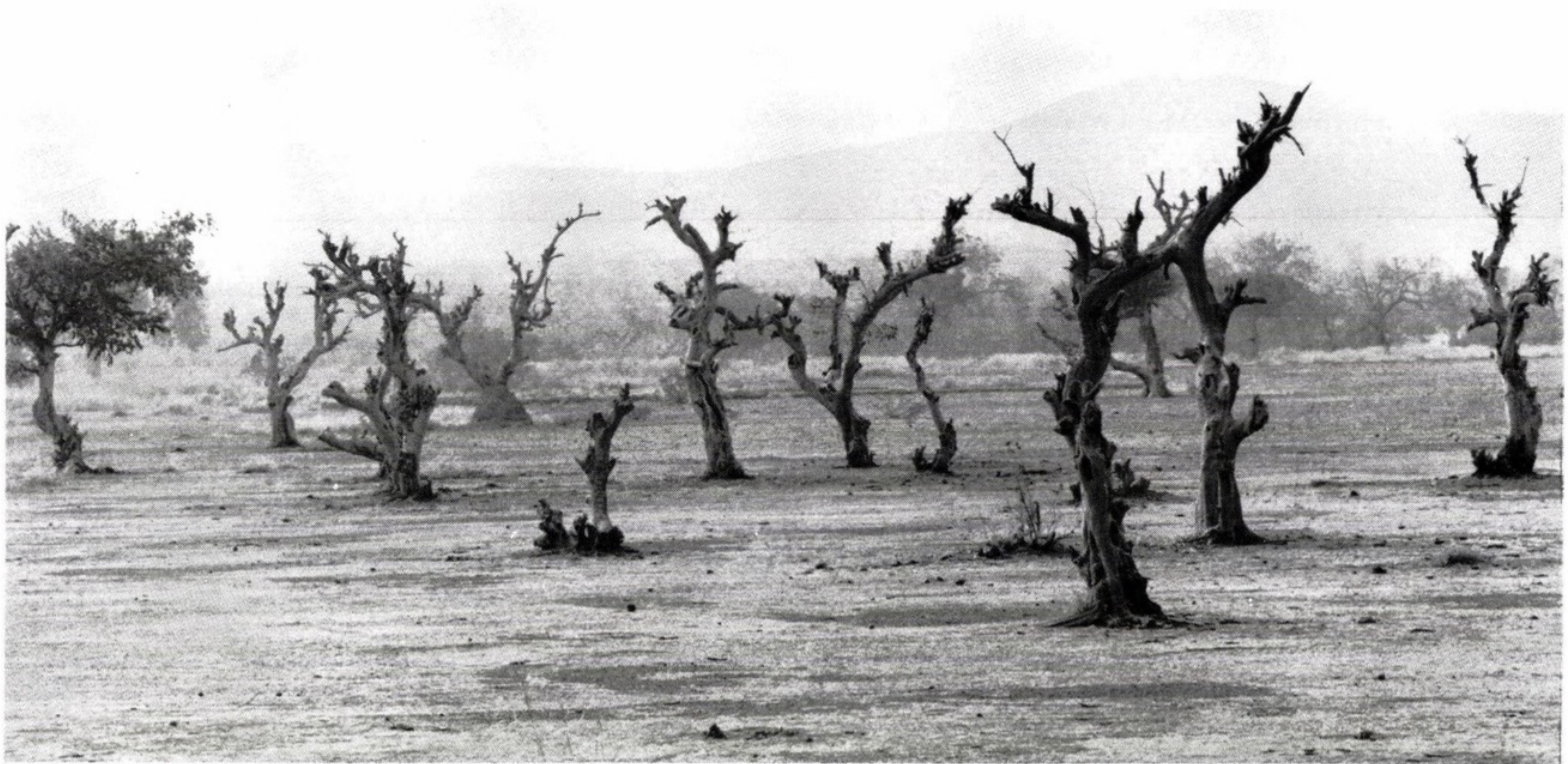
The quick-profit value system of big business is catching. When rural people can't beat 'em, they are forced to join 'em.

So it is not only all of us in the North – and the elites of the South – that keep the

Biological war: the Vietnam conflict deadened 2.5 million acres of forest and made over 5 million acres unproductive thanks to toxins like Agent Orange.



GRIFFITHS / MAGNUM



MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

Solving the debt crisis could mean more to maintain fertile soils and forests than installing birth control clinics in every village.

global economic system going, through our consumerism and through voting in governments (closely allied to the military and to TNCs) who operate by its tenets: people in the South are enmeshed in it too. Most Southerners will dislike the global economic system not because they see that it is inherently destructive but because they are its victims rather than its beneficiaries. There is nothing intrinsically pure about

being a Southerner, or intrinsically wicked about being a Northerner. We are all caught in the same net.

All modern governments are committed to a 'pro-growth' economic policy – one that perceives its voters primarily as consumers who must want to consume more and more. Ever-increasing consumption is the breath that inflates the industrialized world's economic balloon; as soon as you

stop buying, it shrivels up into a pathetic wrinkle. You have to keep on buying – until the balloon bursts and we are left with grubby scraps of rubber on a wasted planet. How did we come to fall for such a ridiculous way of running our world? ■

1 Paul Shaw, *Populi*, Vol.16 No. 2 Dr mahbub ul-Haq, *The Double Edged Sword*, a BBC/Word-Pictures television documentary. 3 SIPRI, 1991. 4 John Vidal in *Oxfam/Guardian Earth* supplement,(June 1992).

Also Worth Reading on ... Population

Edward Goldsmith's lifework and ecological *cri-de-coeur* has finally appeared. Despite mind-boggling polysyllables like 'homeotelically', the thesis of **The Way** (*Rider, London/Sydney/Auckland/Johannesburg 1992*) is both clear and inspiring.

Alternative Economic Indicators by Victor Anderson (*Routledge, London/New York 1991*) is the first book on global economics I have actively enjoyed. Anderson is a researcher for the New Economics Foundation, the charitable and educational arm of TOES (The Other Economic Summit). The Foundation, which consistently challenges the current global economic order, is based at Universal House, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA.

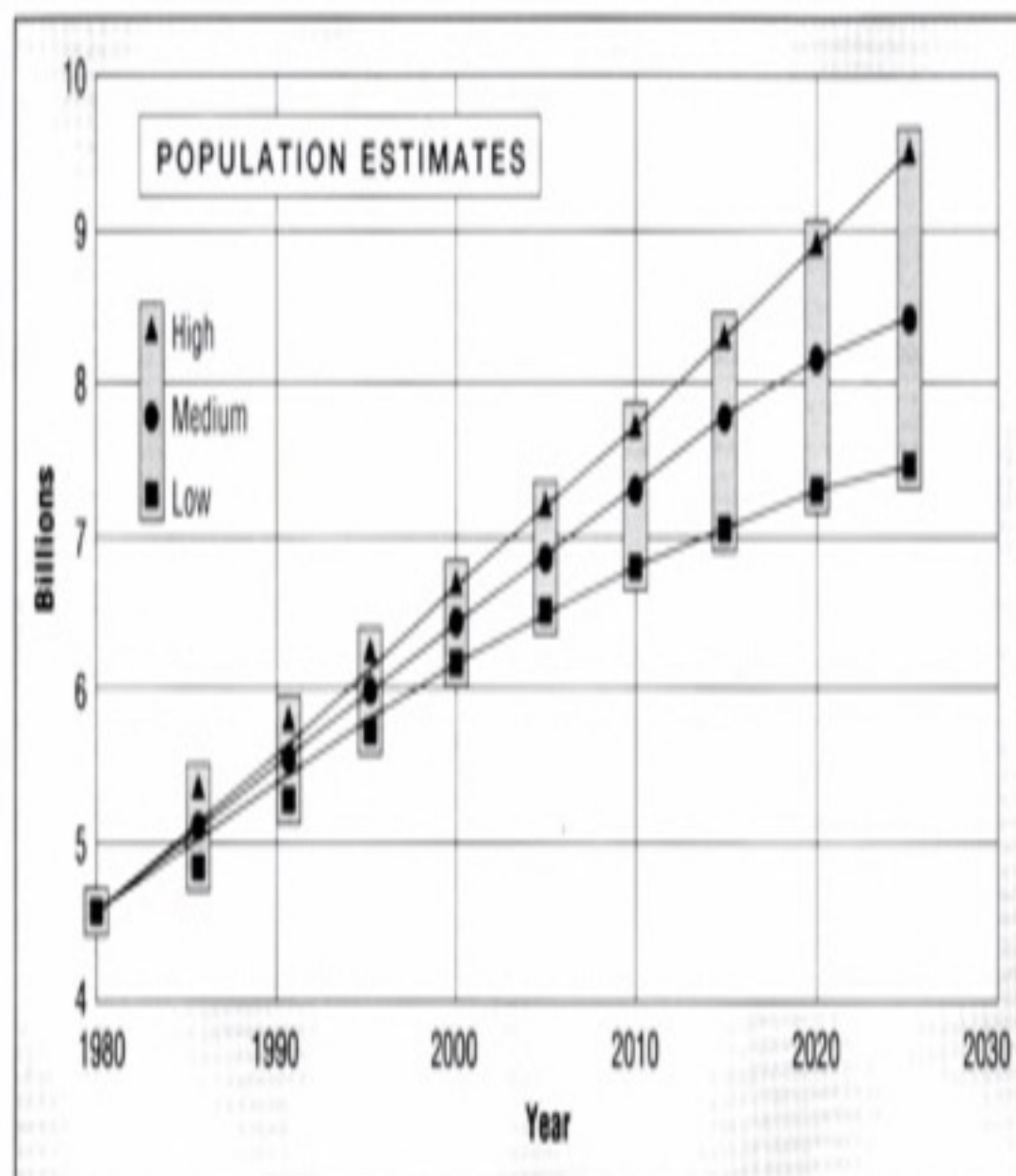
Thomas Keneally is neither economist nor ecologist, yet his latest novel **Flying Class Hero** (*Hodder and Stoughton 1992*), about a group of Australian Aborigine dancers on board a plane hijacked by Arab revolutionaries, is packed with insights into issues such as the clash of post- and pre-industrial societies. It is especially good on the tension between the wish for change through force and ideological domination on the one hand, and through a more complex and sometimes confusing process of individual empowerment on the other.



KORKY PAUL

THE HUMAN FAMILY

There are an estimated 5.5 billion people of the planet. About 4.3 billion live in the South, about 1.2 billion in the North.



The UN produces three different projections on future population. By the year 2025 there could be:

- 9.5 billion people (high variant/gradual slow-down)
- 8.5 billion people (medium variant/ current slow-down)
- 7.5 billion people (low variant/dramatic slow-down)

The differences depend on whether the rate at which population is growing slows down more gradually than at present, or at its current rate, or more dramatically.¹

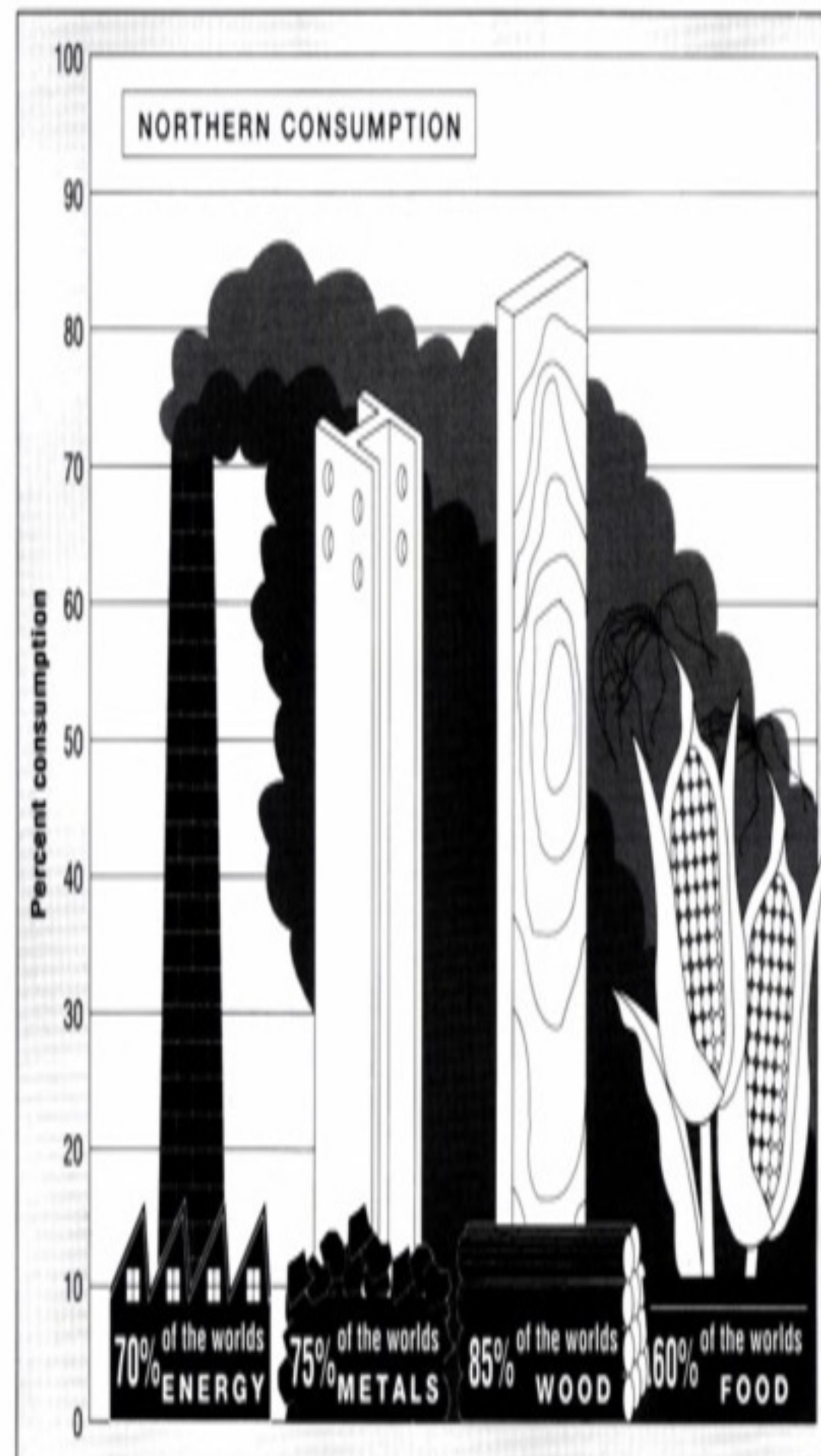
LIFE ON EARTH

Will population control save the planet?



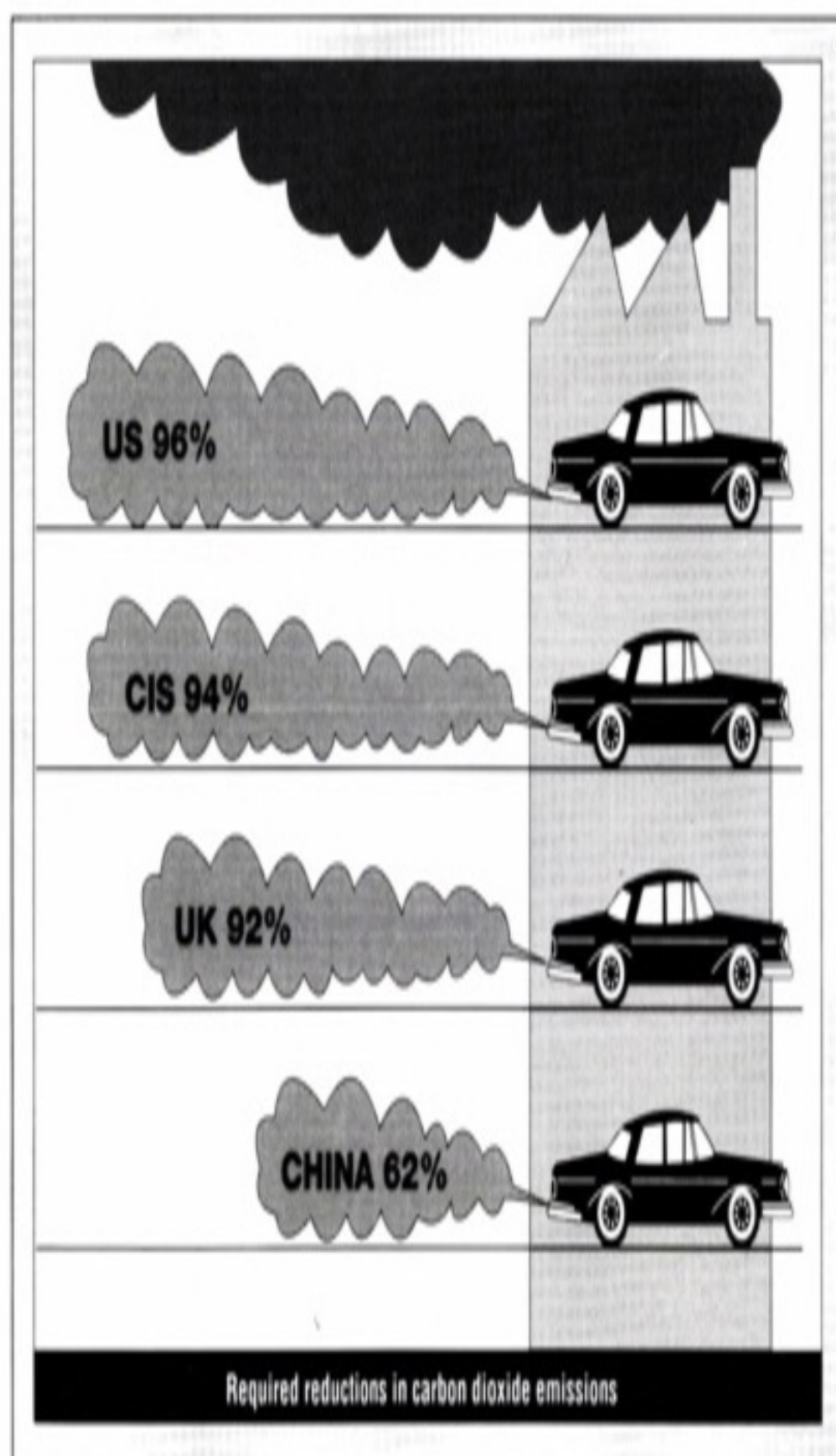
APPROPRIATE CONSUMPTION

Fewer people doesn't mean less consumption. The North has fewer people but at present consumes:⁵



CURBING CARBON

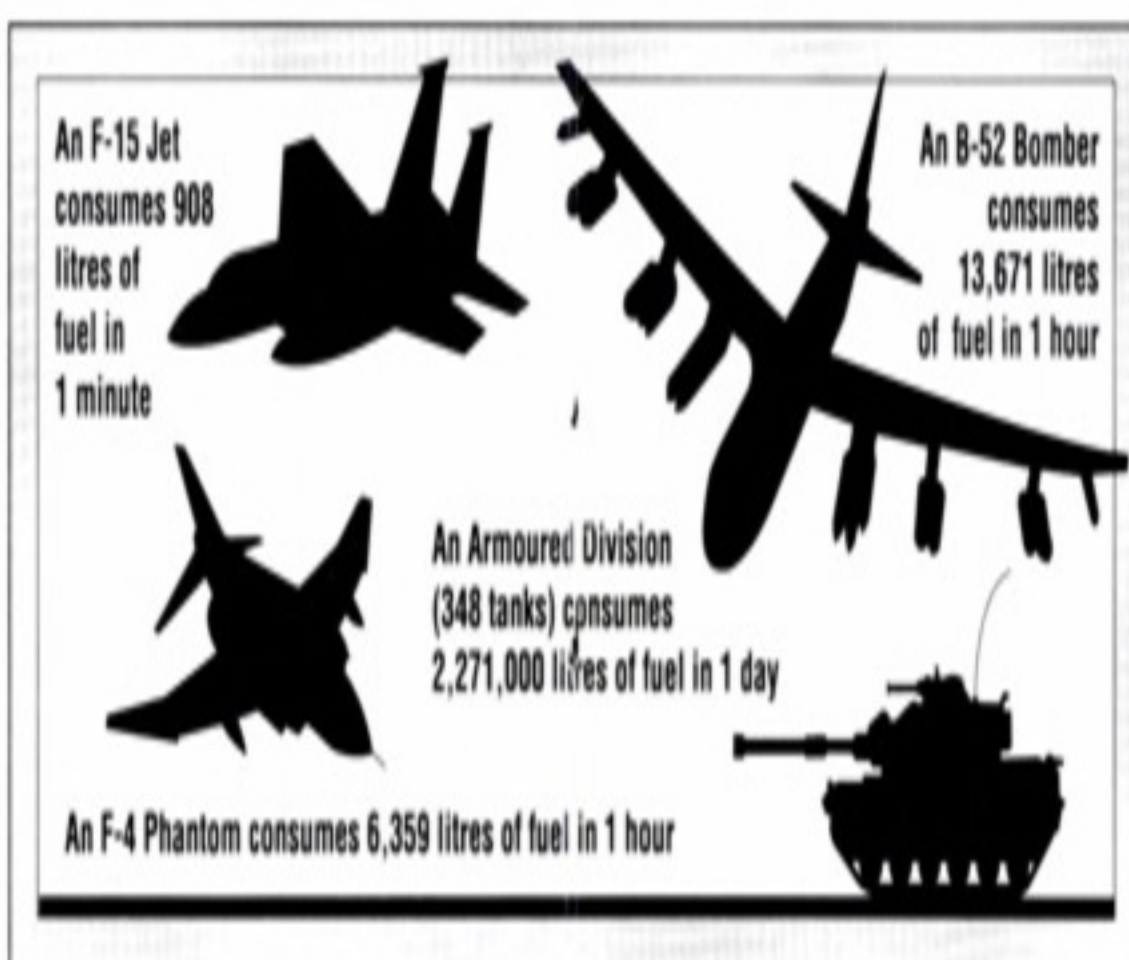
Fewer people doesn't mean less pollution. The countries of the North have fewer people but to stabilize the global climate they will have to reduce their carbon dioxide emissions drastically.²



MILITARY MESS

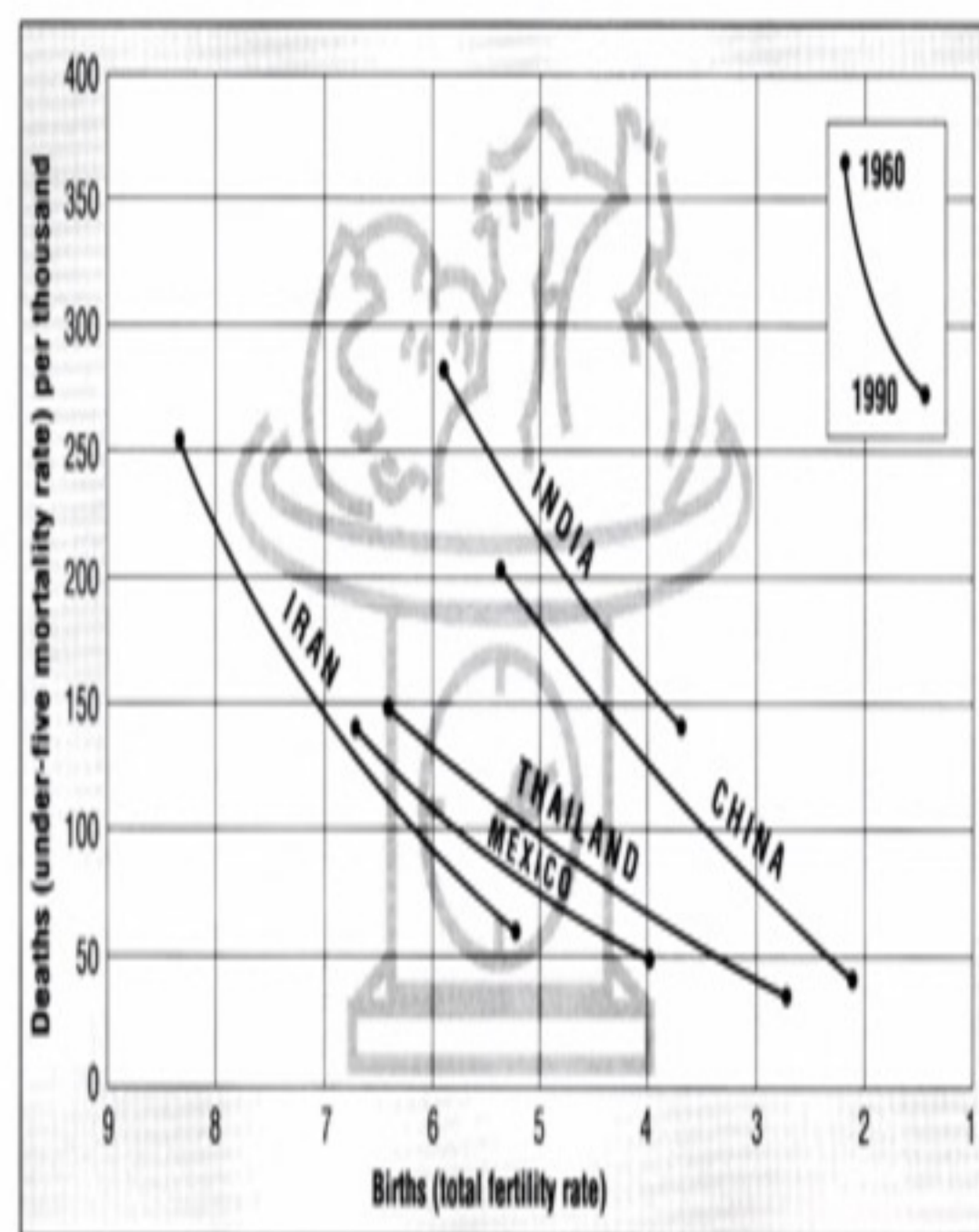
● The military is the most environmentally destructive institution in the modern world. The US Pentagon produces more toxic waste than the five largest multinational chemical companies combined, pumping out nearly a ton of toxic pollutants every minute.³

● An F-16 Jet taking off for a regular training mission consumes 3,400 litres of fuel. In less than an hour the plane uses almost twice as much gas as the average US motorist during one year⁴ – approximately 1364 litres.



CHILD ALIVE

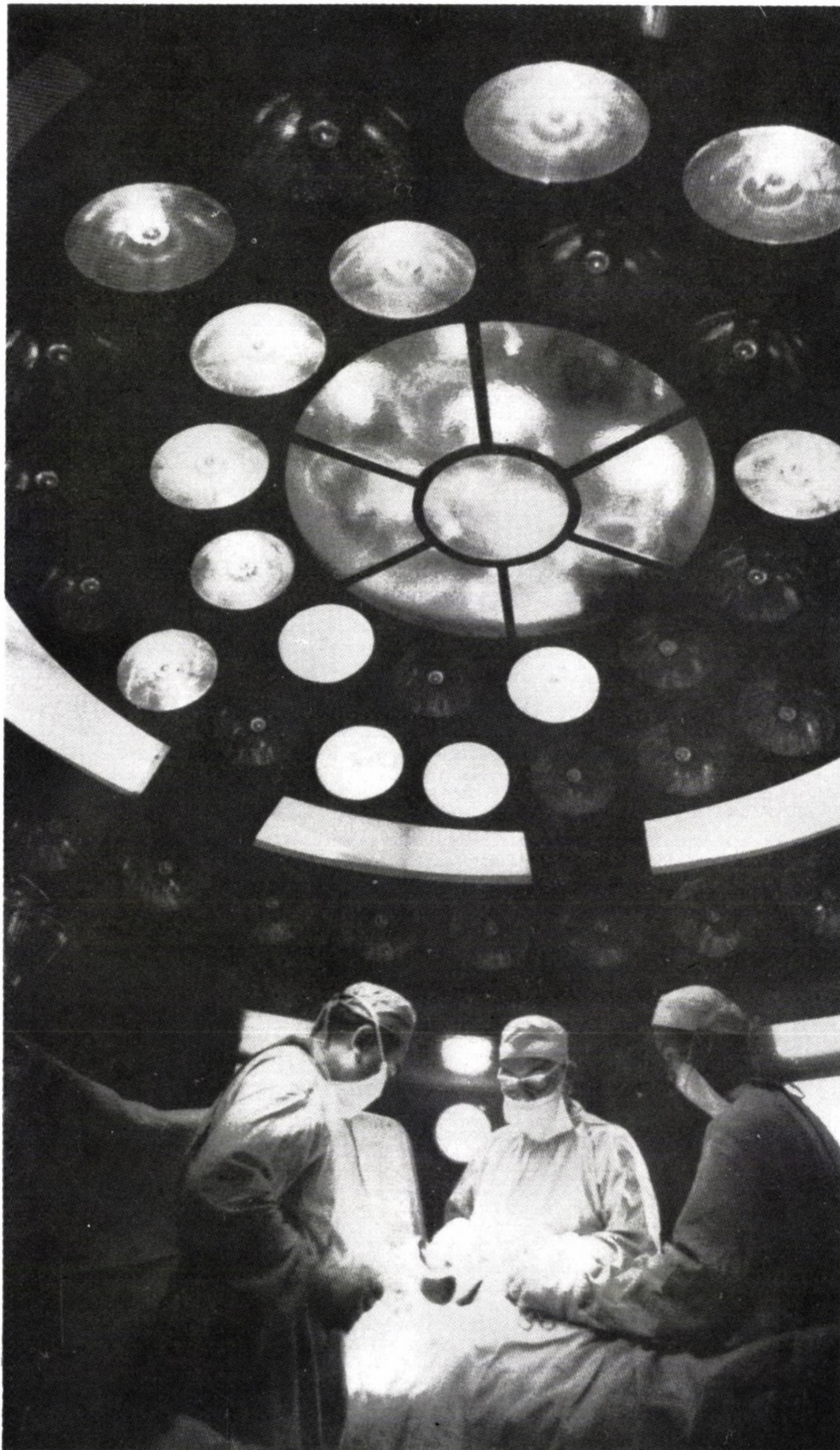
Fewer child deaths doesn't mean bigger population size. Fertility tends to drop when parents are more confident that their children will survive. It does not happen all at once. At first, falls in the death rates of children under five years old are not usually accompanied by significant falls in fertility. But later, the pattern becomes mixed. And later still, as under-five deaths drop to 100 per 1,000 births or less, the birth rate falls dramatically.⁶



1 UNFPA, State of World Population Report, 1992 2 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 3 Joni Seager, Earth Follies: Making feminist sense of environmental issues, 1991. 4 Lester R Brown, Worldwatch Institute 1991. 5 UNDP, Human Development Report 1992. 6 UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 1992.

The healer myth

Why the North wants to mess about with the sex lives of Southerners.



PUT the population and environment issue to a group of therapists. 'Why do we insist on solving the "population problem" over there in the South', I asked, 'when the major problem for global survival lies at home in the North?'

'The healer myth,' was their answer. 'If you want to deny your sickness, you split it off and project it on someone else. Then you can behave like a healer, looking after this other "sick" person.'

Applying this to the population issue, we see that the North projects the global environment's sickness onto the South, seeing the crisis as caused by the South's pathological behaviour (uncontrolled population), in order to avoid looking at our own pathological behaviour (uncontrolled economic growth). It's a potent defence mechanism, which allows us to deny our responsibility.

Taking on the role of healer also allows us to feel powerful and successful in the face of the environmental collapse that is undermining our confidence in our way of life. We turn up with our remedies – our implants, coils and condoms.

'What's more,' said the therapists, 'you can even succeed in apparently "curing" this sick person. The trouble is, you won't really be curing them; you will only be setting up a deeper cycle of abuse.'

This sounded interesting. Did this apply to population too? If we succeeded in 'curing' the high fertility rates, which we have defined as the problem, it would make us feel a lot better. But of course we would not have cured the root cause of environmental degradation – which is the domination of the planet by the North. Rather, our efforts will only have intensified this domination: for the North will now control not only the fields and factories but even the wombs of the people of the South.

But I don't want to dismiss the contraceptive solution. Why quibble, if the wishes of people from the South and the North appear for once to coincide? It's hard to disagree with the favourite family planning slogans: 'Every child should be a wanted child. Before you be a mother, be a woman. Women shouldn't have babies too

High-tech healers: the North relies on technology to cure the population problem.

young, too old, too often or too close...'

Perhaps family planning could be an offering from the North to the South that's genuinely worth having. The 30 to 50 million induced abortions a year certainly indicate a desire for contraception.

My own experience of family planning, via relaxed country general practitioners in the UK, was reassuring. No-one ever coerced me to stop having children; a range of contraceptive options was explained to me, and the least invasive and risky options offered (including, on occasion, a cheerful 'Don't bother!'). My health was monitored, and when I had bad reactions the treatment was immediately modified. Sterilization was never mentioned.

But I am an affluent woman in the North, and so my fertility is not perceived as an economic or environmental problem. When I wonder whether or not to have a third child, my health, my freedom to work, and how the rest of the family might feel about another baby are the only issues raised. Contraception is merely a means by which I am offered more freedom to choose the life I want to lead; more security that the choice I make will come about.

But would offering me freedom and security still be the motivating factors of contraceptive-suppliers if I were an impoverished woman in the South? Ines Smyth, population researcher, has come to the conclusion that the prime motive of family planning programmes throughout the world is population control. Women have been the targets of family planning initiatives – but their needs and perspectives have been ignored.

She gives as an example the Indonesian Family Planning Programme, where: 'In

the early stages...contraceptives were promoted for their health benefits to mothers and children. However, this was an explicitly strategic decision, rather than a reflection of the concerns of the programme. In fact it was felt that this was a more effective way of introducing the programme, since "people might respond better to the health dimension than to any demographic dimension considerations".¹

‘ The Northern healers see only a global ‘management’ problem that needs to be controlled. ’

The cynicism masked by this jargon doesn't stop there. She reports on local authorities who refuse to employ 'non-acceptors' of family planning (or should this be 'of population control?'); sometimes they employ the non-acceptors but delay paying them their wages.

Worse follows: 'Researchers working in different parts of Java relate instances of village leaders dismissed for refusing to use coercive methods towards eligible couples, and incidents of women locked up in the office of the village head to be injected with contraceptives. It is also known that "safari" sterilizations are being sponsored... a police doctor is reported to have performed 185 sterilizations a day.'

And in 1989 Tapol, the Indonesian Human Rights Campaign, made the very serious allegation that schoolgirls in East Timor were being injected with contraceptives without their knowledge.

So does Indonesia provide a particularly

poor example of non-coercive family planning? On the contrary, 'It is constantly being cited as a success,' says Smyth, and in 1989 it won the UN's Population Award.

The previous year's winner was China – a country where the slaughter of girl babies is so common that Chen Muhua, one of China's most powerful women, recently warned that China would have an 'army of bachelors'. John Aird, a senior research specialist in census data, suggests that the international agencies were so eager to reach lowered fertility figures they didn't bother to see how they were achieved.

'Like the intellectuals of the 1930s,' he writes in *The Slaughter of the Innocents*, 'who admired the apparent efficiency of Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, family planning advocates saw their objectives being attained more speedily in China than in developing countries with less centralized governments, and they were inclined to ignore or excuse the cost in human rights and other human values. Lack of concern about violations...is a sign that the international family planning movement has crossed the line from humanitarianism into zealotry.'

In other words, the Northern healers see only a global 'management' problem that needs to be controlled, disconnecting themselves from an empathetic human-to-human awareness of the needs of individual recipients.

Far from increasing a sense of security, such violations of human rights raise enormous anxiety. The coercive sterilization programmes of the 1970s in India are said to have set back family planning programmes for years.

New anxieties are also being raised. For example, Chinese parents of only-children are said to be worried that their spoilt 'little emperors' and 'empresses' will not work hard enough to look after them in their old age. And they will have to work very hard, as there will be so many old people to support and so few young ones to support them. For China will not be able to set up fast enough, nor afford, a state welfare service to look after all these old people, when even the bureaucracies of the rich North – who have had a great deal more time and money to get to grips with the change in their demographic composition – are struggling to support their pensioners.²

In these ways, in the act of 'curing' the supposed problem, the North may instigate deeper cycles of abuse, through the domination of the vulnerable by the powerful. And 'the vulnerable' ultimately includes not only the poorer people of the planet but the planet itself. ■

A one-child family in Shanghai. Maybe fine for today but what about tomorrow?



MELANIE FRIEND / FORMAT

¹ Ines Smyth, *The Indonesian Family Planning Programme, Development and Change* (Vol 22 1992) Hazel Henderson, *World Paper*, (April 1991).

The pathological game

*Just who is out of
control? Anuradha
uncovers more
shocking
truths.*

PETER WILLIAMS

A QUESTION that has intrigued me during the course of this exploration is why the population graph creeps along the bottom of the page for so many centuries before racing upwards as though running up a cliff.

Politicians seem to be very fond of this line and take a thrilling and perverse delight in pointing to its sudden rise, but it seems to me just as important to find out how it managed to lie supine for so long.

Was it simply that the exponential growth of human numbers had not registered on the graph until a key moment, like a jet gathering speed along the runway before it soars off? Perhaps people in the past were killed off by sabre-toothed tigers, or plague, or a lack of soap?

Listening to observers of semi-traditional societies gave me a surprising piece of information: apparently people in pre-industrial societies did not go in for producing as many children as possible. What they very sensibly focused on was producing as many *surviving* children as they could. So customs were built into their traditions that protected children already born in order to help them go on surviving even if this meant fewer births.

To take the simplest of examples, breastfeeding was universal and prolonged. This not only fed the babies at the breast a perfect, nutritionally-balanced diet but also immunized them. Obviously these factors massively improved these children's chances of survival. Less obviously, breastfeeding also de-stressed their community in other ways, for example by producing a high degree of emotional security in the children who were less likely to cling, whining, to the skirts of busy mothers. It was therefore an empowering and liberating act for both child and mother. In addition, the prolonged breastfeeding lowered

‘ The Southern population growth that the North so hates and fears is a consequence of its own pathological system. ’

the mother's fertility through natural hormonal changes, so her births were more likely to be spaced healthily apart.

The simple act of breastfeeding creates, in the relationship between mother and child, a sustainable mini-ecosystem, which helps produce effects that range from maintaining the inner well-being of the baby all the way to maintaining an environmentally-friendly population size. An important principle is embedded here: far from hav-

ing to choose between guarding a baby's right to the best possible care and guarding the rights of the planet, we find that the same rights that protect babies also protect the community and its environment.

This is destabilized by the introduction of glamorous tins of imported babyfood. Now, hundreds of thousands of artificially-fed babies fall sick and die each year. And because their babies die, or look like they might die, parents try again for another baby – and the fertility rate climbs. A sickly, insecure and growing population replaces a small, secure and healthy one.

All this results from the overturning of just one cultural tradition. Ecologist Edward Goldsmith adds another: 'Each individual belongs to an extended family and lineage group which provides an extraordinary degree of security. What is more, each individual has a right to the land they and their family occupy by virtue of their status as a member of these groupings. In addition, the agricultural methods used are designed to maximize security even at the cost of limiting yields. [Modern] development changes all that.'¹

Someone has to be the loser of the modern economic game, for it is a game whose rules demand losers as well as winners. It is inherently predatory, and predators can't survive without victims. In fact, like a hungry alligator, it needs a lot of victims to keep it fed. The environment is among its prey, as are the poor – and the smallest and most vulnerable fish are the children of the poor.

People who fall prey must adapt to survive. Where adults have been severely deprived of material resources with which they can buy security, comfort or energy, their children – like it or not – must provide these comforts. Their rights as children, to be protected, educated, allowed to develop their full potential, fly out of the window.

At least 100 million child labourers, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), are at work every day; Defence for Children International puts the figure at 150 million children in Asia alone. The cost of these children's stunted lives is not accounted for when economists make their calculations of GNP.

So the response of poorer Southern fam-

ilies to have many children to help them survive, though exploitative of those children, is a logical response to the poverty created by the overarching exploitation of the modern economic system. Ironically, therefore, the Southern population growth that the North so hates and fears is a consequence of its own pathological system.

We are being forced to a shocking conclusion. The global economic system riggers enormous environmental destruction through uncontrolled Northern consumption, militarism and waste; it triggers the



MARK EDWARDS / STILL PICTURES

Land rights for women: a key to solving the environmental crisis.

desire for the same kind of destructive, egocentric lifestyle in the South; it triggers a degree of destitution in the South that forces the poor into acts of uncharacteristic environmental degradation and child exploitation – and it even triggers rapid population growth itself.

It is no longer sufficient to see population growth as a secondary cause of environmental degradation, with economic growth as the major cause: rapid population growth is itself a symptom of the pathological economic system.

But our perception of the world is usually otherwise, influenced as we are by the spin-doctors of the North who present the problem as the solution. This morning, for instance, population gurus on the radio were tut-tutting over the debates at the Earth Summit. If only there was more economic development, they were saying sadly, then we could find the money to pay for the environmental measures we need. ■

Swapping breast for bottle: opening the death trap.

¹ Edward Goldsmith, *The Ecologist*, (Vol 19 No 1, 1989).

Simply ... An ancient tale of fertile autonomy



ONCE UPON A TIME there was a sorcerer who went from village to village disguised as an old beggar. His plot was to kidnap fertile young virgins and take them back with him to his palace where they would remain under his control. One day he kidnapped the eldest of three sisters by magically trapping her in a basket he carried on his back.



2 Back at the palace he let her out of the basket and gave her a bunch of keys and an egg. He told her to take the egg with her everywhere she went – but on no account to use the smallest key which unlocked the door to a secret room. The sorcerer departed and the girl wandered throughout the palace, marvelling at the rooms filled with silver and gold.



3 When she came to the door of the secret room she could not, of course, resist entering. Inside she found a bath filled with blood and dismembered limbs. She was so shocked by this that she dropped the egg in the bath. And she could not remove the bloodstains from the egg however hard she scrubbed.





4 As soon as the sorcerer returned he demanded to see the egg. When he saw the bloodstains – evidence of her disobedience – he told her: ‘You have entered the room against my will. Now you must enter it against yours.’ He dragged her into the room, killed her and put her in the bath. Then he set out for her younger sister – who suffered a similar fate.

5 However, the third and youngest sister broke the pattern of his success. He managed to kidnap her. But instead of obeying him and taking the egg with her she hid it carefully – then set out to explore the palace and the secret room. She was shocked to find her dismembered sisters in the bath but having hidden the egg it could not fall and become bloodstained. Then, acting intuitively she put her hands into the bloodbath, drew up the pieces and laid them out in the right order. To her surprise – and joy – the pieces joined up and her sisters sprang back to life. When the sorcerer returned the youngest sister showed him the unstained egg and then – with her sisters – escaped from the palace.



6 And what’s the moral of this gruesome tale? Well, like the youngest sister we have to work outside the rules laid down for us by the sorcerer. We have to live creatively and spontaneously by our own values and intuitions – even when we find ourselves within the walls of the sorcerer’s palace. And of course we have to take great care of the egg, the symbol of fertility.



What really matters

A possible route — beyond the lies, towards global survival.

It's not altogether surprising that the neo-Malthusian anti-populationists want to cure the South's 'people-plague' (yes, they actually call it that) rather than examine their own consumeritis and techno-addiction. As the beneficiaries of a sick, unbalanced system, why should they want to bring about a genuine cure?

Their nineteenth century guru, the Rev. Malthus, didn't like sharing either. When anarchist-philosopher William Godwin suggested that in a society where people

lived 'in the midst of plenty and where all shared alike the bounties of nature', misery, oppression, servility and other vices would disappear, Malthus wouldn't hear of it. 'All cannot share alike in the bounties of nature,' he stated decisively, as if that was that.

It's very tempting to believe someone who sounds so certain. I've just been reading Shakespeare's 'Othello' with my daughter (it's her exam text) and its villain, the murderous Iago, sounds so confident he

has the innocent Othello crumbling before him within moments, believing in all the illusions he spins. But neither of these paired roles of murderer or ditherer is presented by Shakespeare as a model for healthy action: they are the split halves of the predator-victim psyche — and the stuff of tragic endings. What we need to find out is how to live happily ever after.

If it's any comfort, the prolifically creative Shakespeare looked to female fertility as a potent healer of split psyches and eco-

logical crises. But female fertility has for centuries been mistrusted as disgusting, messy, frightening or even sinful by those who prefer to place their trust in order and control. And this may also be a clue to why fears about the growing environmental crisis are now linked so powerfully to rapid population growth.

As I said before, we used to worry about resources running out, but that problem we sometimes think we can cope with,

‘ If I have very little because that is all I have chosen to have, I am rich: for I have everything I want. ’

by imagining mechanical ways to ‘get more out of less’ – for example, by building microchips or growing higher-yield crops. But now we are faced with a new kind of fear, of crossing ecological thresholds into uncontrollable and irreversible catastrophes. It’s like the difference between people who work very hard but know they have a way to recover – say by having a snooze – and people who overwork until they die of a heart attack. No amount of snoozing is going to help: extinction is forever. Similarly, once we have set the process of global warming catastrophically in motion, what can we do? Nothing but wait to fry or drown.

And this fear of uncontrollable ecological collapse seems to echo ‘uncontrollable’ population growth: it is easy to put them in the same box of fear. Feeling in control therefore becomes a key need. We eagerly don the patriarchal healers’ robes and tell other people, the grateful ‘uncontrolled’ patients how to control their births.

At the London launch of the latest UNFPA report, a member of the audience asked Dr Sadiq why the report did not call for population policies in countries in the North. (After all, one child in the North makes so many more times the environmental impact of one child in the South.) A flustered Dr Sadiq, surprised out of bureaucratic discretion into a more characteristic honesty, replied: ‘Oh, I don’t think our donors would like that.’

Quite so. The rich countries dominate the UN agencies – even one headed by a woman from the South personally committed to women’s empowerment.

So how are we now to move towards healing the ecological crisis? In the journey from page four to page twenty-seven, certain principles do emerge. For a start, we must drop the idea that we in the North have all the answers. The North appears ‘successful’ only if we look at a very narrow slice of time and space; as soon as we expand our vision to include the whole

planet and several generations, our way of living is shown to be impossibly unsustainable. To stop pushing our false perceptions on the South would be a good start.

For us in the North to compensate the South (with interest) for the environmental and human costs we have made them incur would make more sense. At the least we should change the worst rules of our economic game: by cancelling the Southern debt; paying fair commodity prices; reducing arms sales; no longer dumping hazardous products, wastes or dirty technological processes on the South; controlling TNCs.

We also need to take on board some unaccustomed humility, and recognize that

people in the South do not need to be ‘managed’ and controlled according to blueprints from the North. Indeed, even the seductive Northern concept of the ‘global commons’ can be a way for the North to suggest that ‘what’s mine is mine but what’s yours is ours’. Rather, people in the South need to be allowed to redeem their sense of personal security, so that they can feel re-empowered to manage their own lives. Restoring the right to one’s own piece of land is one key to that security.

Landlessness is the cause of massive rural distress, and adds to the homelessness in cities. Environmentalist and scientist Vandana Shiva believes that it is the re-distribution of land in Kerala that caused its

Looking after the needs of women will help, not hinder, sustaining the environment.



EUGENE RICHARDS/MAGNUM



ANNE CECILIA; GONZALES-VIGIL / REFLEX

Shutting out children isn't going to solve the ecological crisis.

much-vaunted fall in fertility, rather than economic growth. Land-rights, especially for women, can also make the people who work it feel secure enough to lavish the time and energy on old, sustainable methods of cultivation that respect the generosity of the land, instead of joining in the rape-the-land methods of big farmers.

And this leads to the heart of what is so soul-destroying about modern poverty. To live simply and frugally according to the values one has chosen is not to be 'poor', as many people who have chosen the spiritual path of voluntary simplicity will attest. The key lies in that word 'voluntary'. If I have very little because that is all I have chosen to have, I am rich: for I have everything I want.

I am richer still if I can deploy that little

according to my own values. But if the profoundest ways I know of living are forcibly taken away from me, I am poor to the point of death, for my life is lived at the mercy of others – and according to values that hold no meaning for me. No wonder the Kalahari nomads died when they were put in white prisons.

Those of us who have more than enough need to explore the possibilities of 'appropriate consumption'. Buddhist scholar and community leader AT Ariyaratne told us a story once about a very rich man who invited him home to dinner. Each plate on the table was guarded with serried ranks of silverware. The rich man wanted Ari to talk about world hunger, he said, because it concerned him deeply. What could he do to help?

Ari said, 'This.' And leaning forward, he cleared away four-fifths of the knives and forks and spoons. We all laughed – but, Ari added, the sad thing was the rich man never understood what he meant.

Real choice for humans, both as consumers and as social beings, is a matter of quality, not quantity. Shelves filled with impersonal goods, like address books filled with reminders of shallow friendships, present us with meaningless choices. As the Earth's possible end comes into view, we are faced with choosing what really matters to us all – perhaps the opportunity in the planet's crisis. And extraordinarily enough, it could be that caring for what really matters to us is what will save us.

Looking after children's rights, we have seen, helps protect the environment, not destroy it. Educating girls is another human right that needs to be extended rather than diminished: it too benefits the environment in the long term through lowering infant mortality rates. And providing women with their right to health care and genuinely empowering birth planning methods turns out not only to be more ethical but more successful in the long term than rapid-result coercion. A good tree bears many good fruit.

But it is counter-intuitive (or rather, counter-brainwashing) for us to take in that having what we really want, behaving according to values we really believe in, could actually be for the general good. We have so long been brought up to assume that we must sacrifice what we really want if we want to be good: to give up our deepest desires. The hardest stumbling block for environmentalists may be to get across the idea to its Northern customers that living simply is not the same as living meanly: it may be more about having enough, though no more than enough, of what we really, deeply, want. At Rio, Maurice Strong cleverly re-phrased 'voluntary simplicity' as 'sophisticated modesty' to take away the edge of asceticism that turns some people off.

We may come to prefer our leaner, more spiritual selves. But while we cling to the idea (since we, too, are deeply insecure, and not about to let go our habits of mind easily) that having more is better for us and gives us more freedom of choice, we are not likely to part with our hold on the world's resources. And the death of the planet, and the end of all choice, may be the result.

If we – all of us on planet Earth – are to have a future, it seems inescapable that we will have to make sacrifices. But the consolation is that the sacrifices we most need to make are of the things we need the least. What we can retain – and indeed extend – are the rights that matter most, for these not only protect the quality of human life but also care for the environment. ■

INDIA

Narmada climb-down

World Bank finally admits project flawed

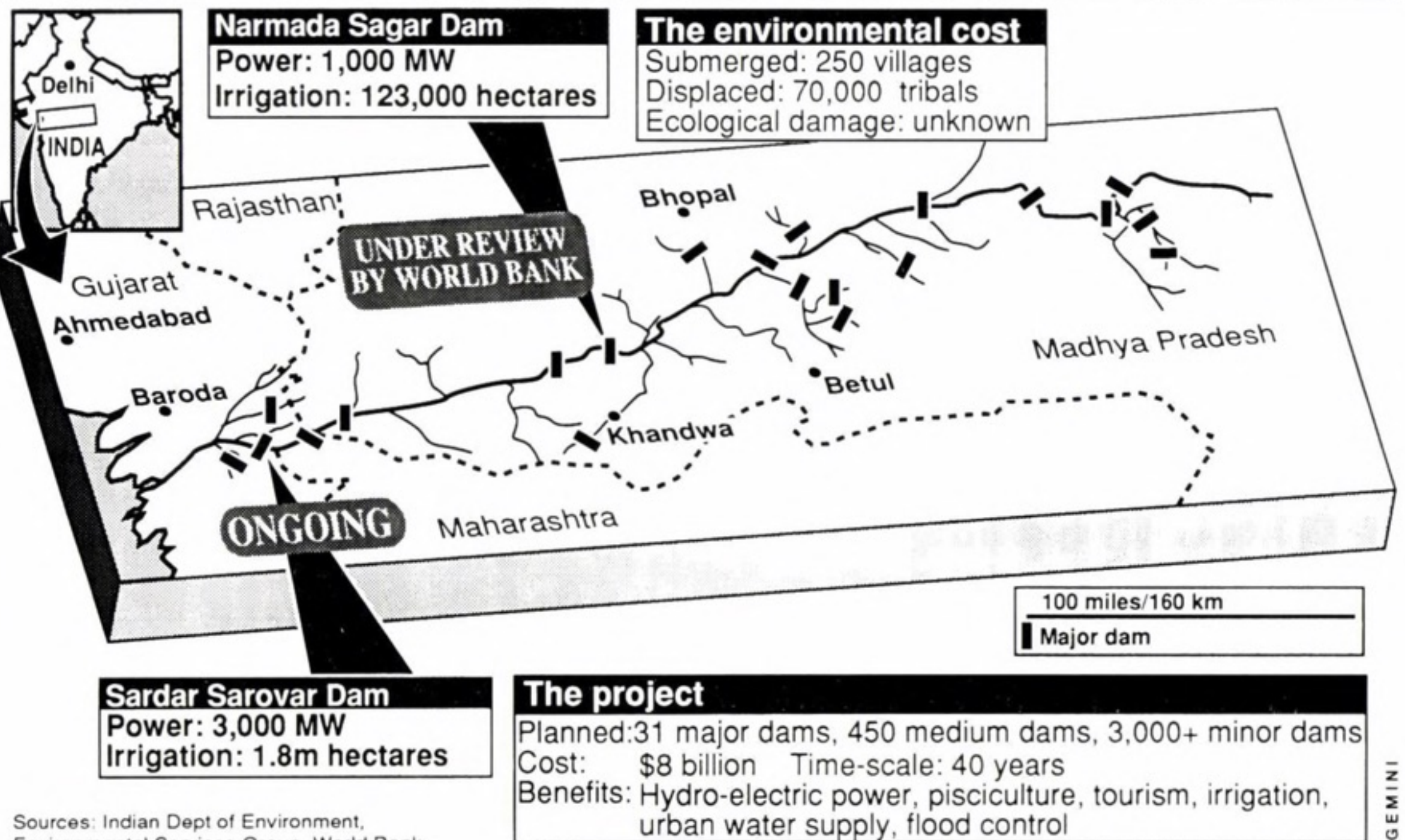
A NEW 400-page report on India's Narmada River dam project has called for a suspension of World Bank funding for the series of 3,000 dams, because the project is beset by problems. Based on the first ever independent review of a World-Bank-funded megaproject, the report says it is not possible to fairly resettle the 250,000 tribal people about to be displaced, and environmental issues are not being dealt with properly.

Following the report, Bank president Lewis Preston acknowledges that 'performance (of Narmada) has fallen short of ... Bank policies and guidelines.' But although Preston accepts that there are 'deficiencies in the Bank's appraisal of the project, the borrowers' implementation and the Bank's supervision', he still insists that the continued Bank support for the Narmada project is justified.

The Bank has already pumped \$450 million into the programme which is scheduled to cost five and a half billion dollars in all and is the world's biggest-ever river project. It involves building a series of dams on the Narmada river. Forest and farmland roughly equivalent in space to 250,000 soccer pitches will be flooded. And up to one and a half million mainly tribal people will be forced to leave their traditional lands.

Proponents of the scheme portray it as a dream development project. According to the corporation set up to build the dams, they will provide 15 billion gallons of water daily, irrigate 11,000 square kilometres of land, protect 750,000 people from flooding

Battle over the Narmada mega-project



and generate 1,450 megawatts of hydro-electric power.

But opponents say it will force 250,000 tribal people out of their fertile forests and devastate the environment. Local opposition to the dam has met with a violent response from the authorities.

The degree of controversy over the project in India and among many Western environmentalists led to Japan axing its funding for the dams last year and prompted the Bank to commission the review.

The report by leading environmentalist Bradford Morse and campaigner Tom Berger accuses the Bank of bending and even ignoring its own policy and Indian law concerning the resettlement of indigenous peoples and the environmental impacts of

the project.

It concludes that the numbers of people facing resettlement has been grossly underestimated and that over half are being denied compensation. In addition irrigation potential has been exaggerated and damage to down-stream fisheries has been ignored.

While not calling for the Narmada project to be scrapped they advise the Bank to completely reassess it, and add that little can be achieved while construction continues.

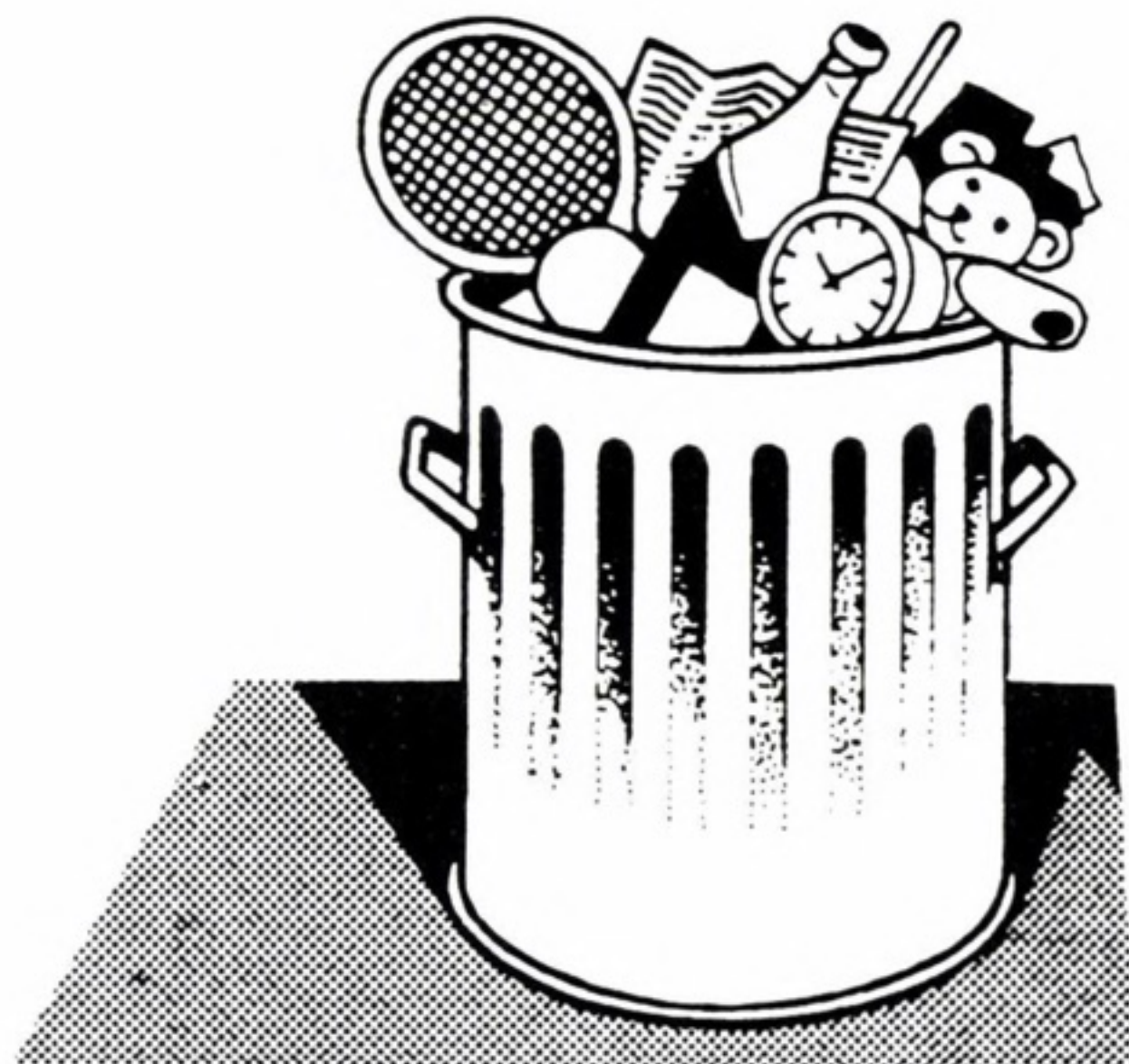
Both Morse and Berger are believed to have been under pressure to tone down the report. Both refused, but they did agree to withhold publication until after the Rio Earth Summit.

Damien Lewis/ Gemini

Dutch Chip

Less rubbish is being thrown away by the residents of Hoofddorp, Holland, after using new dustbins implanted with a micro-chip. The 'smart' bins measure how much refuse is collected and allow the local authorities to give refunds to people who throw away least. An estimated two-thirds of local households who took part in the 26-week test qualified for a refund. Rubbish loads have been cut by 13 per cent. Heavily-populated Holland produces more household waste per head of population than any other European Community country, and is fast running out of space to dispose of it.

Consumer Currents, No 146, 1992



Child charities chasm

When it comes to looking after the children of their employees, the British children's charities are not the models you might expect.

A survey by the white-collar union, Manufacturing, Science and Finance, reveals that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the National Children's Home provide only the bare legal minimum of 40 weeks maternity leave. And the National Children's Home has no paternity leave at all.

None of the five charities surveyed, which included Save the Children Fund, Barnado's and The Children's Society, help their employees with childcare through vouchers or workplace nurseries. With women and children suffering the brunt of their meanness perhaps someone should remind them that charity begins at home.

New Statesman & Society, Vol 5, No 208 1992

CAMBODIA

Minefields

The persistent threat

CAMBODIA'S population holds the unenviable record of being the most disabled on earth. One in every 236 Cambodians has lost a limb, according to the recent Asia Watch report entitled *Land Mines in Cambodia: The Coward's War*. The number of mines laid in Cambodia is not known, but some indication was given by the US Agency for International Development which discovered 6,000 mines in a one kilometre stretch of ground while building a road in Thmar Puch.

Not surprisingly mines have accounted for over 50 per cent of war casualties in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge has used mine deployment to control population movements, effectively trapping people in its zones and restricting movement; the mines tend to be concentrated around villages and the majority of victims are civilians. A common tactic during the war was to bombard a village with artillery, thus flushing out the inhabitants to be blown up by surrounding minefields.

The Chinese T69 mine, widely used by the Khmer Rouge, is designed to maim rather than kill its victims. The injured thus drop out of the workforce and ever-increasing numbers of the able-bodied are needed to provide care.

In Cambodia there are only 500 doctors and 7,000 nurses for a population of over eight million. In some rural areas there is one doctor to 30,000 people. With an infant mortality rate of 133 in every 1,000, the country is only slowly creaking into action.



Lack of funding has prevented major de-mining operations from even starting. Thai troops are helping to remove mines from Cambodian soil but this action is restricted to Route 5, the main trading route between Phnom Penh and the Thai border: the de-mining extends one metre on either side of

the road.

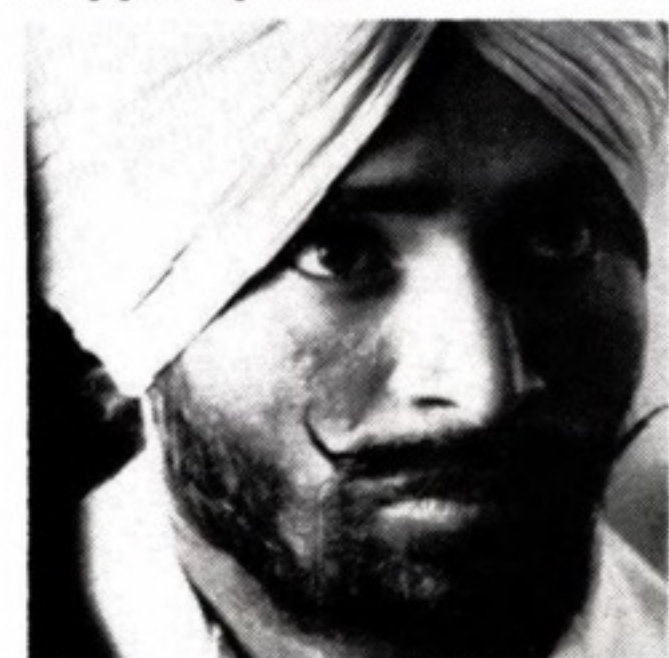
If repatriation of refugees from Thai border camps is to take place as planned according to the UN peace agreement then a full de-mining operation will be needed to prevent greater numbers being disabled.

Paul Donovan

DAVID MUNRO

Sikh shoot-out

A gun battle near the Sikh holy city of Amritsar on 9 June, the latest in the long-standing Sikh campaign for an independent Khalistan, is causing red faces among Indian police and has turned into a human rights case in New Delhi. A force of 300 police surrounded a house in Behla village, but were pinned down by heavy fire. So they used local villagers as human shields; seven villagers died in the cross-fire. Then the police called for help. An army battalion and commando unit, about 1,200 soldiers in all, supported by helicopters, were rushed to extricate the trapped police. After the soldiers wiped



out the house with anti-tank rockets they found the bodies of two Sikh militants, one rifle and one machine gun.

Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol 155, No 26 1992.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

YOUTH

Veneration gap

India's 'now kids'

MILLIONS of India's urban teenagers are currently in the sway of a Western life-style cult. Youths in India's big cities are listening to pop music, wearing American Wrangler jeans, eating fast food, drinking beer, visiting discotheques and watching Hollywood films.

Nick-named the 'now kids', they are discarding age-old inhibitions and openly displaying rebellious attitudes towards traditionally-held middle class social values. 'They want to look and act differently,' says Watan Singh, a college teacher in Delhi. 'Even their parents have difficulty understanding them and their lingo.'

Coming from India's burgeoning middle class – estimated to be around 150 million strong – this 'mod' generation is the product of the English medium school system which

mushroomed in every city and town in the 1960s offering English language education – the key to better job opportunities. For even after 45 years of independence, English is still the dominant language.

The new generation have shed traditional constraints. Today young men and women mingle in mixed sex groups, and dating is becoming acceptable. Innocent affairs among teenagers – holding hands, sitting close in restaurants under dim lights – are now familiar urban sights.

There are as many theories about teenagers becoming Westernised as there are experts. 'I'm only certain of one thing,' says one teenager. 'We are the most 'named' generation. We have been called the 'pop generation', 'now generation', 'gyrating generation' and the 'lost generation' to name but a few. Perhaps we are all rolled into one – 'the confused generation'.

Atiya Singh/ Gemini

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Multinational manipulation

The price of Guatemala's exports

SHIRT manufacturers Phillips Van Heusen is among companies named as violating labour rights in a petition issued against Guatemalan businesses by campaigning groups concerned with human rights and labour relations. If successful the petition could result in the removal of duty free status for Guatemalan exports to the US which would mean a 60 per cent loss of value to exporters.

Clothing workers are paid less than one dollar a day in the factories of Guatemala, which employ 45,000 workers, 80 per cent of whom are women. Export earnings from clothing have grown from less than one million dollars six years ago to over \$100 million in 1991, making it Guatemala's second leading export to the US.

The development of export industries reflects the new international division of labour. The skilled work is done in the North before products are transferred to the South for labour-intensive completion. As one US Agency for International Development (AID) official stated, the *maquila* is 'the exportation of labour without having to send the workers abroad'.

The Guatemalan Government (advised by AID) has effectively made each *maquila* factory a free-trade zone in which the factory owner receives tax incentives, is free to repatriate capital to North America and can treat workers with impunity.

Around 87 per cent of Guatemalans live in dire poverty and the *maquila* industry provides the poorest with an alternative to harvesting – but sometimes the cost is high. Reports of sexual and physical abuse are



frequent. Researcher Cindy Forster writes, 'In the *maquila* industry, line chiefs daily coerce women to render sexual favours in factory offices and storage rooms. The Lucasan clothing factory employs 900 people, most of them women. Every fifteen days the women are lined up and the managers beat their stomachs to make sure they are not pregnant. Anyone found pregnant is immediately fired.'

Yet between 1985 and 1990 just one business was fined for breaking health and safety regulations. When unions attempt to organize, companies typically close down, fire the workers and then reopen nearby with non-unionised labour. Aura Marina Rodriguez, union organiser at Phillips Van Heusen, was recently shot; management still oppose the organization of a union.

You can put pressure on the company to investigate this incident and its general conditions of labour in Guatemala by writing to Larry S Phillips, Chief Executive Officer of Phillips Van Heusen. He is great grandson of the company's founder, considers himself a human rights advocate and served on the board of Oxfam America before founding the American Jewish World Service as a counterpart development agency. His address is: *Phillips Van Heusen Corporation, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104. Tel. 0101 212 468 7100.*

Paul Donovan

Big brother, bigger stick

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a threat to the US, the question is what is 'reasonable' for the White House to spend on its military and intelligence activities? In the 1980s, the US increased defence spending by 50 per cent, even though the rest of the world did not keep pace. So the US share of world military spending rose from 22 per cent to 28 per cent. In the 1990s, if military cuts remain as modest as those proposed by President Bush and the Pentagon, their defence and intelligence budget can be expected to make up half of all global military spending.

When the US pays up its United Nations bills, it limits its contribution to 25 per cent of the UN budget, on the sound principle that it would be unhealthy for any one country to dominate such world institutions. Yet its military spending was already three per cent higher than this ceiling in 1989 and is rising rapidly. Why do the rules change?



The Nation, Vol 254, No. 22
1992

Drugs award from Diana

The NI has won a Media Award from London's Institute for the Study of Drug Dependence (ISDD). It was given for 'objective reporting on drugs' in our October 1991 issue *The Needle and the Damage Done: The Crazy War on Drugs*. David Ransom, editor of the issue, received the award on behalf of the Co-operative and the contributors, from Princess Diana, Patron of ISDD, on June 22. The NI won the magazine section. The award for television went to Granada TV, for Radio to the BBC and for newspapers to the 'eG' section of *The Guardian*.

These were the first such awards to be made by ISDD, with the aim of promoting high standards of media coverage on drug-related issues. Lord Deeds, from *The Daily Telegraph* and chair of the judges' panel, said that the panel had been anxious to set the standard for future awards. The NI makes a habit of intruding into 'specialist' areas of reporting with what we hope is a radical cutting edge, and we don't usually expect to receive plaudits for doing so.



END

END Quote

Words of wisdom from the Vice President of the US, Dan Quayle:

'Hawaii has always been a very pivotal role in the Pacific. It is in the Pacific. It is part of the United States that is an island that is right there.'

Speaking with reporters in Hawaii,
May 1989

'We offer the party as a big tent. How we do that within the platform, the preamble to the platform, or whatnot, that remains to be seen. But that message will be articulated with great clarity.'

Interview with the Washington Post,
December 1989

'I believe we are on an irreversible trend towards more freedom and democracy, but that could change.'

Address to Newspaper Society forum,
London April 1990



Writer, producer, director and actor, all at 19: **Matty Rich** (right).



Straight Out of Brooklyn

directed by **Matty Rich**

Juice

directed by **Ernest R Dickerson**

The so-called 'New Wave' of black American cinema is a groundswell of emerging talent – but it is often talked about more as a genre because of the similarity of its themes. This means directors like **Matty Rich** and **James Bond III** are thrown into the same bag as older hands like **Bill Duke** and **Charles Burnett** – and that serious work like *Boyz N The Hood* gets lumped together with glossy pulp like *New Jack City*.

Given the hard facts of African-American life there are bound to be recurring themes. And one such theme – youth trying to break out of the inner-city impasse – links **Juice**, the debut by **Spike Lee's** cinematographer **Ernest R Dickerson**, and **Straight Out of Brooklyn**, the much-acclaimed debut by 19-year-old writer-producer-director (and co-star) **Matty Rich**. In each, a group of young black kids dreams of escaping from a dead-end life in New York and finds the temptation of crime tearing them apart and wrecking their hopes. Both are shamelessly polemical but take radically different approaches both in style and in rhetoric.

The more straightforward of the two, **Juice** milks its selling points effectively – a punchy crime narrative, personable young leads, and a background in Harlem's hip-hop scene. **Juice** addresses itself to the hip-hop constituency that made *New Jack City* a sure-fire hit but doesn't glamorize crime in the same way. Instead it offers a sobering, almost nihilistic, view of

street crime as a false escape route. Young deejay Q (**Omar Epps**) is all set for fame spinning the wheels of steel but instead gets led astray by his friend **Raheem**, a maverick gone gun crazy, who can be seen lurking around doorways in the dark as he loiters ready to blow away his former buddies.

Yes, it's that schematic, and from about halfway only the music (by Public Enemy producer **Hank Shocklee**) and the acting keep this rather predictable structure afloat. **Juice** is an enjoyable B-movie but little more.

Politics ★★

Entertainment ★★

Equally schematic at moments, but far more ambitious, is **Rich's** **Straight out of Brooklyn**, which gives the same message an even more chilling treatment. His background is the emotive stuff of family melodrama, the young hero inhabiting a domestic hell in which depressed, humiliated father (an intense **George T Odum**) knocks mother black and blue. The acting and a cold-blooded distance in the shooting make it at times extraordinary; there's a touch of European-style vérité in the way **Rich** shoots the family quarrels up close in long, static takes.

Just as effective is the way he creates a sense of the Red Hook housing project as a place where people live and just about get on with each other – even the scenes of street badinage (in which **Rich** himself excels as motormouth **Larry**) have a sense of weariness about them, rather than the simmering violence that energizes **Juice**. **Rich** ends with a too-neat double death, an implausibly grandiose (and conventional) flourish for a film which otherwise dictates its own terms so convincingly. But unlike **Juice**, it doesn't offer any answer to a no-win situation, and its sheer intensity as film makes it galvanizing.

Politics ★★

Entertainment ★★



books

Revolution from Within

by **Gloria Steinem** (Bloomsbury)

Consider the plight of a frustrated writer who has spent years editing a leading magazine and finally manages to win herself a few months' grace to write a book about self-esteem. But a therapist friend reads the manuscript and suggests that the biggest self-esteem problem in the book is that of the author, who hadn't referred to herself once in the entire text.

This happened to **Gloria Steinem**, ex-editor of the US magazine *Ms.* 'I had felt drawn to the subject of self-esteem not only because other people needed it, but because I did,' writes **Steinem**. 'I had come to the burnt-out end of my ability to travel one kind of feverish, productive but entirely externalized road – and I had no idea why.'

Fortunately **Steinem's** self-esteem recovered sufficiently for her to spend another three years working on the book – and herself – to produce an honest, incisive and readable account of the ways in which the social structures of patriarchy undermine the self-worth of each one of us.

Take beauty. Depending on which culture you come from and which era you live in, being beautiful can mean being massively fat or cadaverously thin, young or old, white or black-skinned. Standards of beauty change according to what a society wants or fears. Yet meeting the current beauty criteria of Western society costs women our self-esteem, as we judge our bodies in relation to impossible standards of thinness, whiteness, bosomlessness and so on. In the US about 150,000 anorexic women starve themselves to death every year trying

to measure up to perfection, while most other women are either on a diet or feeling that they should be.

As **Steinem** explains, both men and women have masculine and feminine energies within them, but in patriarchal society the sexes are encouraged to develop only those small parts of themselves which fit their socially defined gender roles. No wonder individuals' self-esteem suffers as a result, for how is real self-worth possible when you have to pretend that you are less than you really are?

Women suffer most because patriarchy only values masculine qualities. But men suffer too, forced to deny vital parts of their softer, more expressive selves. The consequent lack of self-esteem for both genders has everything to do with politics, since the way we treat others reflects the way we feel about ourselves.

The book is a valuable addition to the new feminist literature which is deepening the 'personal is political' slogan by insisting that if we are to transform society's oppressive structures we must begin with ourselves.

Politics ★★

Entertainment ★★



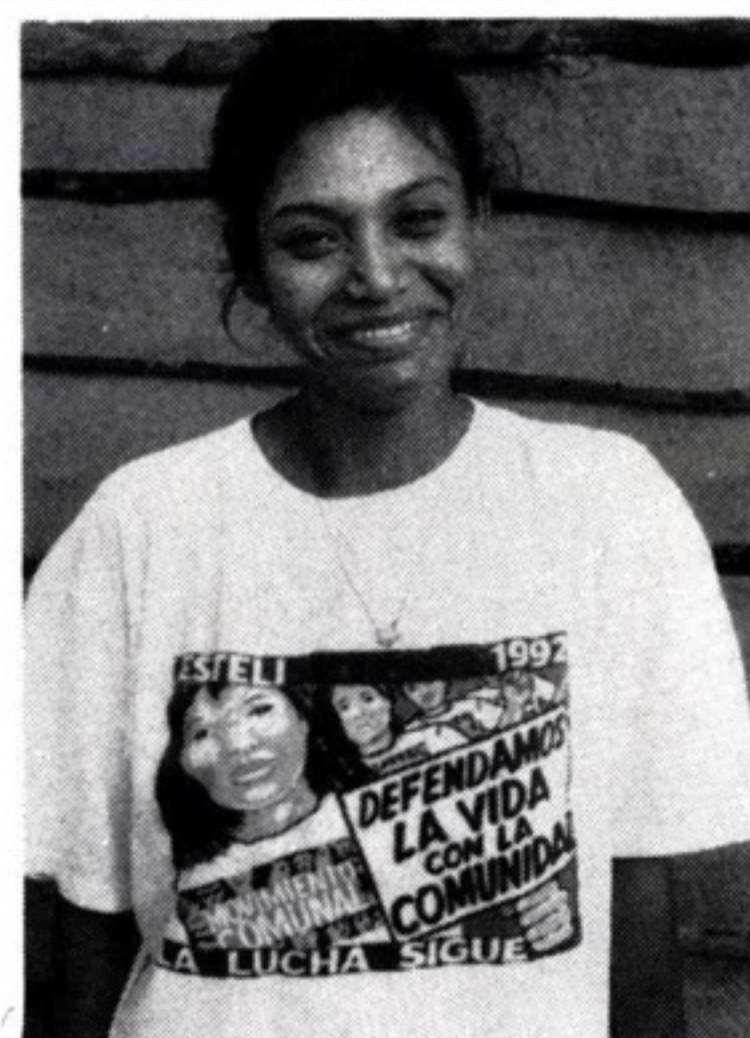
music

Eyes Open

by **Yousou N'Dour** (Columbia)

For years, the Western record industry dreamed of finding the 'African Bob Marley'. This mythical figure would embody all African music in its diversity and have sufficient charisma to sell the music to a sceptical mainstream market. Some contenders suffered from having this improbable mantle thrust upon them – notably **Nigeria's** **King Sunny Ade** and **Zimbabwe's** **Thomas Mapfumo**.

These days, however, there is one star who comes close to realizing that dream, and entirely on



'Defend life with the community' says the slogan on this **Nicaraguan** health worker's T-shirt – an oblique reference to her Government's preference for a privatized, hospital-based health care rather than primary health care aimed at the poor. *Against All Odds*, a new video from the **Nicaragua Health Fund** in the UK, graphically shows the impact this preference is having on ordinary people. It is available from **Nicaragua Health Fund**, 83 Margaret Street, London W1N 7HB at £20 (including postage).



Charismatic: Youssou N'Dour.

his own terms at that – Senegal's Youssou N'Dour. The patronage of Peter Gabriel may have helped – although it hindered him somewhat on the dreary LP *The Lion* – but N'Dour has always remained his own man, fighting shy of other artists' spurious 'internationalization' and honing his supple, furiously energetic *mbalax* music with his band Super Etoile.

Eyes Open is noteworthy for being released on 40 Acres and a Mule (through Columbia), the new record label set up by filmmaker Spike Lee. Being associated with such a hugely iconic figure in black US culture can only enhance N'Dour's own status (though the connection makes Lee look pretty hip too). And the album has been packaged as a strategic address to a new constituency. The customary Wolof lyrics are translated into English with N'Dour's explanatory notes and he proves an acute, committed commentator on world affairs from an African perspective. He pleads for unity on the opening manifesto-track *New Africa*; makes a wittily ironic point on the uses and abuses of telecommunications on *Live TV*; and refers to Vietnam and the Gulf on the eloquent, piano-based *Useless Weapons*.

Most importantly, **Eyes Open** makes no commercial concessions to the international market, or even to the rap-centric black US market. Rather, this is the usual tough *mbalax* given a super-confident studio sheen by producer/keyboardist Jean-Philippe Rykiel. N'Dour's voice soars – sometimes plaintive and vulnerable, always skilful and elastic.

Eyes Open is perhaps not as concentrated in its intensity as his last album *Set* but this is still an expansive feast of a record.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

STAR RATING

Excellent ★★★★★
Very good ★★★★☆
Good ★★★☆☆
Fair ★★☆☆☆
Poor ★☆☆☆☆

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

Rai Rebels

... being the record that put Algerian rai on the world music map

IN 1988, along with other reckless pundits, I was forecasting the inexorable rise of Algerian rai music – not only on the world-music scene but as an influence far beyond it. So far time has proved me wrong and rai, which then seemed at the very centre of Algerian political protest, seems to be taking a back seat. But when I listen again to **Rai Rebels**, a compilation from that year, it is easy to see why I was so excited.

Rai is an Algerian dance music derived from Bedouin folk, with elements of French, Spanish and Gnaoui (black North African) musics. Pop-rai grew up in the 1980s but derived from an older form. The previous generation of singers were known as Cheikh (male) or Cheikhate (female); their younger followers took the name 'Cheb' or 'Chaba', meaning 'youth'. The word 'rai' means literally 'opinion' and rai has always been associated with rebellion, easy living and free speech, at odds with the rigorous codes of Islam. A doyenne among the singers, Cheikha Rimitti, took her name from the French for 'pour me another' (*Remettez m'en*).

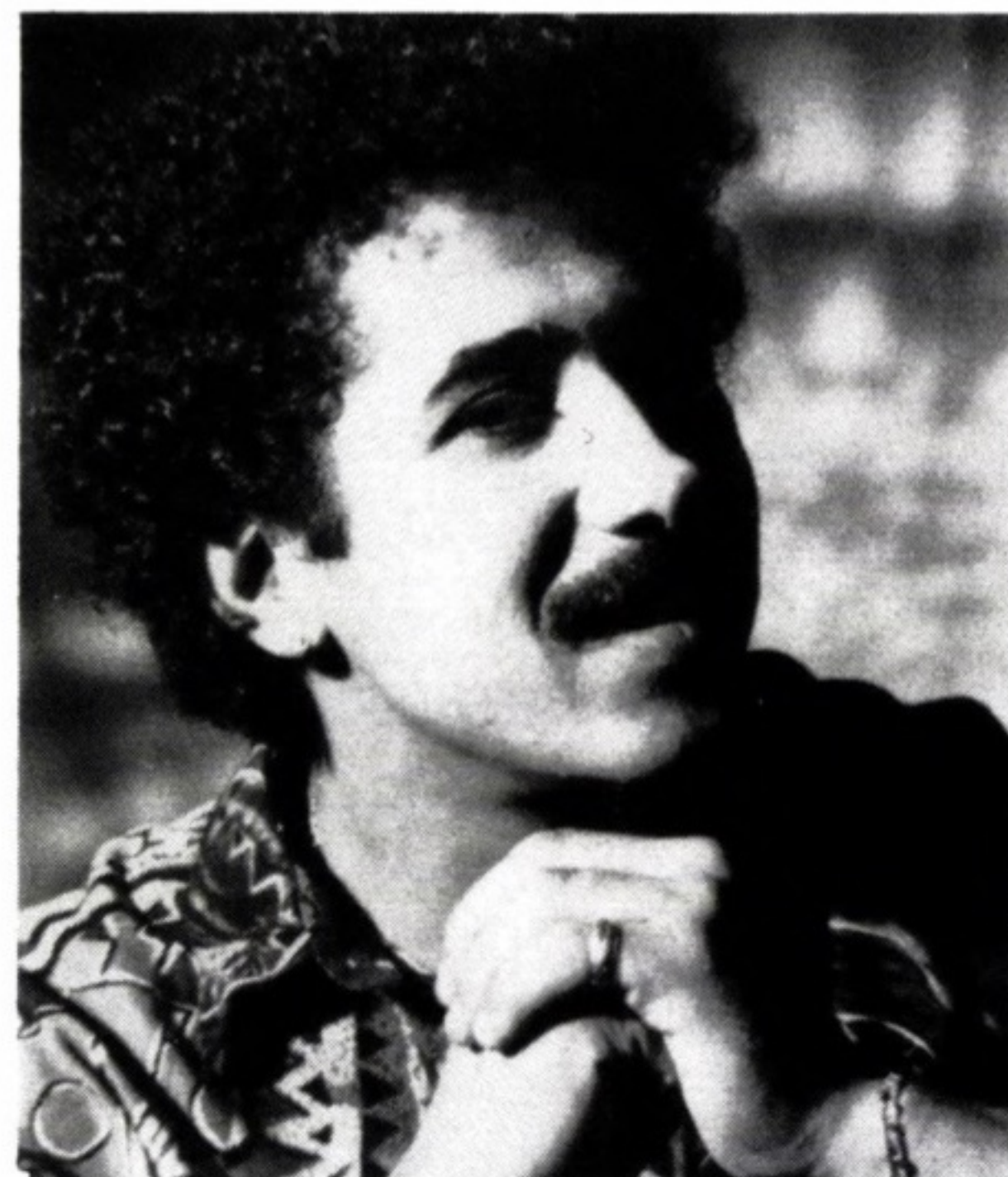
In the 1980s Algeria rai songs – often encoded with innuendo so as not to ruffle feathers unnecessarily – were regarded as suspect and at one time Cheb Khaled, rai's hottest male singer and known as a tearaway, was drafted into the army and had his passport confiscated. As Western attention began to focus on his music, the Government appointed an army colonel to promote it.

There was every reason for the Government to be concerned about anything resembling youth protest in a country in which 65 per cent of the population was under 25. In October 1988 rioting – resulting in the killing of an estimated 500 youths – blew up in protest against high food prices and unemployment. When interviewed, rai artists tended to skirt round the question of how their music might act as a focus for youth unrest. But there are revealing reports of a concert by Khaled in September of that year in which he allegedly precipitated a near-riot in Oran with a song which predicted 'the pot will boil over'.

It's easy to see how rai could be construed as incendiary music. **Rai Rebels** gives only a partial picture, since all the music on it is the work of one producer, the charismatic Fidel Castro look-alike Rachid who works in Tlemcen in western Algeria rather than in Oran, in whose cosmopolitan nightclubs pop-rai originated. Rachid's brand of rai is a dense, urgent mesh of acoustic and electronic sounds – complex programmed rhythms, funk bass, North African percussion and string instruments, together with reedy organ and synthesiser sounds, twanging guitar licks, orchestral stabs and such dramatic samples as *shakuhachi* flute.

The singing itself, improvised around traditional folk patterns, tends to sound monotonous to unfamiliar ears, with the same phrases crop-

ping up again and again: as in rap, these form a template on which the singer inscribes their own identity. A good example on the record is the dramatic duet between Cheb Khaled and Zahouania (legendary because her parents forbid her photo to appear on cassettes) – their vocal parts were recorded some five years apart but are woven intricately around each other.



Cheb Khaled: Algerian rai's hottest male singer.

Much has changed since the heady days this record reflects. Algerian youth now appears to align itself not with the liberalism proclaimed by rai singers, with their songs about love, cars and whisky, but rather with Islamic fundamentalism. In a country where the Government staged a military coup rather than accept electoral defeat by the fundamentalists (and had its President assassinated as a result), Islam has for the moment become a natural home for the rebellious young.

Rai has also taken a back seat on the world-music scene, though it has found its way into the mainstream in at least one way: Cheb Khaled has released an album on a major label (Barclay/London). Calculated to appeal to the MTV/dance market, the record is a funk-rai hybrid co-produced by Michael Brook, who proved with Youssou N'Dour and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan his ability to broaden the appeal of 'difficult' musics without endangering their integrity. It's a disappointing and unrepresentative effort.

But then Khaled, a flamboyant, mercurial figure with an ever-present grin, once told me how he responded to accusations that he adulterated the true Algerian sound. 'If you want to put your culture across, you have to do it differently. It's like cooking: you put in a little tomato sauce, a little pepper, you give it to someone to try, just to taste – then you give them the real dish.' It may be that the strongest-tasting rai is yet to come; till then, **Rai Rebels** is plenty heady enough to be getting on with. ■

Jonathan Romney

Rai Rebels by various artists (Earthworks/Virgin 1988).



QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you appear in this, your section, to be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.

What is the origin of terms such as Dutch Courage, Dutch Auction, Dutch Oven, Dutch Uncle and Going Dutch?



Dutch comforts here displayed in William Buytewech's *Merry Company*, 1617-1620.

● During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was fierce – and sometimes violent – commercial rivalry between Holland and Britain. As a result 'Dutch' crept into the English language as a derogatory term – for example, 'Dutch courage' for false courage (acquired through alcohol) and 'Dutch reckoning' for guessing. But not all 'Dutch' phrases arose in this way. For example 'Dutch tiles' and 'Dutch oven' simply came about because of Dutch designs for these items.

Mark Pack,
York, UK

Is it true that unleaded petrol is less efficient and therefore worse for the environment than leaded in terms of the amount of carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide produced?

● Yes – contrary to the answer printed in NI 234. Unleaded petrol is less efficient than leaded so the miles per gallon are lower.

But what really horrifies me is the way

that, in Britain, benzene is added to unleaded petrol to raise its octane level in order to increase performance. Benzene is a known carcinogen which is banned in the US. Absorbed through the skin, it can produce skin cancer. Some fuel hoses are fitted with shields to help prevent splashing but it is advisable to always wash your hands after filling your fuel tank. Also, do not stand over the fuel line when filling up; inhaling the fumes can produce lung cancer.

This may sound bad enough, but the real danger of benzene is that it passes through the vehicle's fuel system and is discharged into the atmosphere completely unchanged. Neither filters nor converters can affect it. When air is analyzed for pollution statistics the figures usually given are for carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone, but only rarely are the levels of benzene made public. These are always very high, often above levels that the World Health Organization considers dangerous.

So if you have been feeling righteous because you have gone green and unleaded, think again – it might be safer for all of us if you change back again!

Rosemary Thompson,
Heathfield, UK

How is Aotearoa pronounced – and am I the only one who doesn't know?

● Try Ow-tee-a-ro-a.

Beth Simmons,
Bolton, UK

QUESTIONS awaiting your answers:

I've heard that the 'croissant' is linked to anti-Islamic sentiment. Is there any truth in this?

Polly Barnes,
Stratford, UK

Are broad-leaved trees better than conifers in terms of soaking up excess carbon dioxide – and so helping to reduce global warming?

Felex Ansell,
Haworth, UK

How did the wretched term (economic) 'basket case' come from? Who used it first and in reference to which country?

Stephen Langford,
Paddington, Australia

Was one of British Queen Victoria's grandmothers an African princess? Is it true that Queen Victoria's first child was black and was for this reason 'destroyed'?

Jasmine Lail,
Nottingham, UK

Can anyone recommend a book about trepanation or tell me anything about the benefits of having a hole bored in the skull?

Dafydd Saer,
Cardiff, UK

If you have any questions or answers please send them to *Curiosities*, *New Internationalist*, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover).

AND NATION SHALL SPEAK UNTO NATION
AND NATION SHALL BE TOLD WHAT'S WHAT



Maids and spirituals

Nina Silver on growing up with black women – and Jewish racism.

OVER a dozen years ago, I received a valuable education in race relations when, unable to work due to a temporary diabetic condition, I applied for welfare. I was living in Harlem, New York City, which not only seemed to be the welfare capital of the United States but also contained one of the highest concentrations of blacks.

Being on public assistance was wretched. Welfare, I had learned from my white Jewish parents, was only for black people. At the time, the word 'black' to designate race was just beginning to emerge in America's vocabulary – although to my parents, black people were still 'Negroes'. They knew enough not to say 'coloured', which would have revealed a most unenlightened racial prejudice. But privately my parents always referred to black people as 'shvartzes'.

Although they explained to me that 'shvartze' in Yiddish literally means 'black', the disparaging context was unmistakably clear. When Mom and Dad whispered 'shvartze' in annoyed tones, referring to the black women they'd hired to help with the housework and babysit their children, I knew that what they really meant was 'nigger'. It would take me years to recognize that the racism in my family did not indict all Jews.

How ironic that, given my parents' racist attitudes, years later their youngest daughter would find herself showing up with 'shvartzes' at the welfare centre. It was quite an experience to be not only on the other side of the colour line but subject to the same curiosity and indignantly derisive stares from black people that I knew black people had received from my parents when I was younger.

Being on welfare meant periodic investigations by the staff to make sure you couldn't work, that you had a legitimate excuse for taking all that public assistance money (less than \$400 a month plus food stamps). It wasn't obvious that I was ill – my disability was not physically glaring – and it wasn't as if my children's father had just walked out on me; in fact, I had no children. So from the predominantly Third World staff's perspective, I had no right to be there on two counts: because of my skin colour and my life circumstances. I was a privileged honky invading their space.

And the fact that most of the welfare recipients were women did not seem to make it any easier for them to relate to me. From my perspective, they considered themselves black first, women second. The potential for meaningful communication was thus aborted.

I vividly remember the reaction of both my parents to my being on welfare: they were horrified. It challenged every cultural prejudice they had ever assumed: black people were not fit to mix with whites, except when in subservient positions; and I, as a white woman, should especially never mingle with black men because it was sexually suggestive and therefore dangerous. I fought these attitudes, often getting into verbal fights with my family as I grew

older, and was sneeringly accused of being a white liberal.

When I grew into an accomplished musician my parents couldn't understand my affinity for the Negro spirituals that had originally been sung by the slaves. As a singer and composer, I could easily appreciate this richly textured, gently rhythmical form of music. I loved the brilliant work of black musicologist Hall Johnson – not well-known even by well-trained musicians – who arranged infrequently-sung spirituals that he learned from his great-great-grandmother, a former slave. The poignant, sometimes sorrowful, sometimes joyful, but always beautiful spirituals touched something deep inside me. The act of validating suffering by giving it a voice (or song) – in fact validating all those feelings which culturally white folks don't admit are there – has given me

an affinity for the spiritual aspect of American black culture as illuminated in its gospel hymns.

But there was another, deeper reason for my relating to it. I had been brought up by 'shvartzes' from childhood. Black women often took care of me instead of Mommy, and in doing so became a part of my cultural heritage that my natural mother would never understand. These women had names like Treasie and Lavinia, spoke in accented drawls, and cooked strange foods because they were from the South. Although their relationship with me was often emotionally distant, they filled a great need, because even when I was five or six my working mother was rarely around. These women would tell me about their arduous lives and the many children and grandchildren they hardly ever got to see because they were too busy being somebody else's maid.

The most difficult thing about being dependent on these women was that, after a time, they would leave. All through my childhood I watched them come and go without receiving any explanation from my parents. When Treasie left – probably because she was ill – I would have wanted to say goodbye. After a few years, Lavinia, whom I liked a lot, left too. I was never given a chance to say goodbye to her, either.

It never occurred to my parents that I might have been attached to these 'maids'. They were expendable because they were black, and my feelings were expendable because I was a child. I thus learned to identify with certain aspects of black experience. Bonding crosses the colour line.

As a little girl, the gift I received from these older black women was how courage and dignity can survive in the face of immense hardship. Now, at 40, I have a crystalline recollection of these women who hired themselves out as maids to my family, living in a dimly-lit room in our attic and trying their best, only to overhear my parents call them *shvartzes*. ■



Nina Silver: 'The 'maids' were expendable because they were black – my feelings were expendable because I was a child...'

Nina Silver is a therapist, Reichian bodyworker, singer, and composer who writes on feminism, sexuality, the natural sciences, and metaphysics.

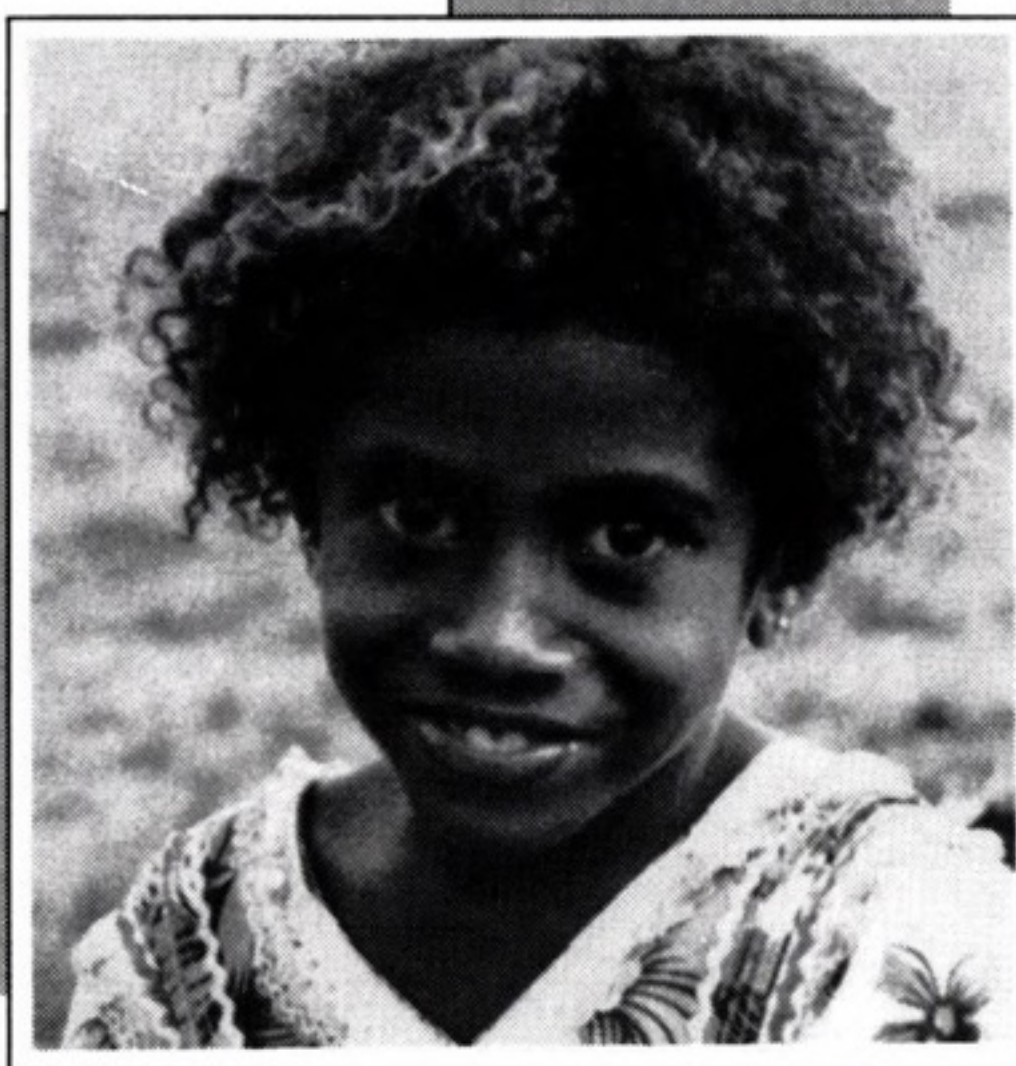
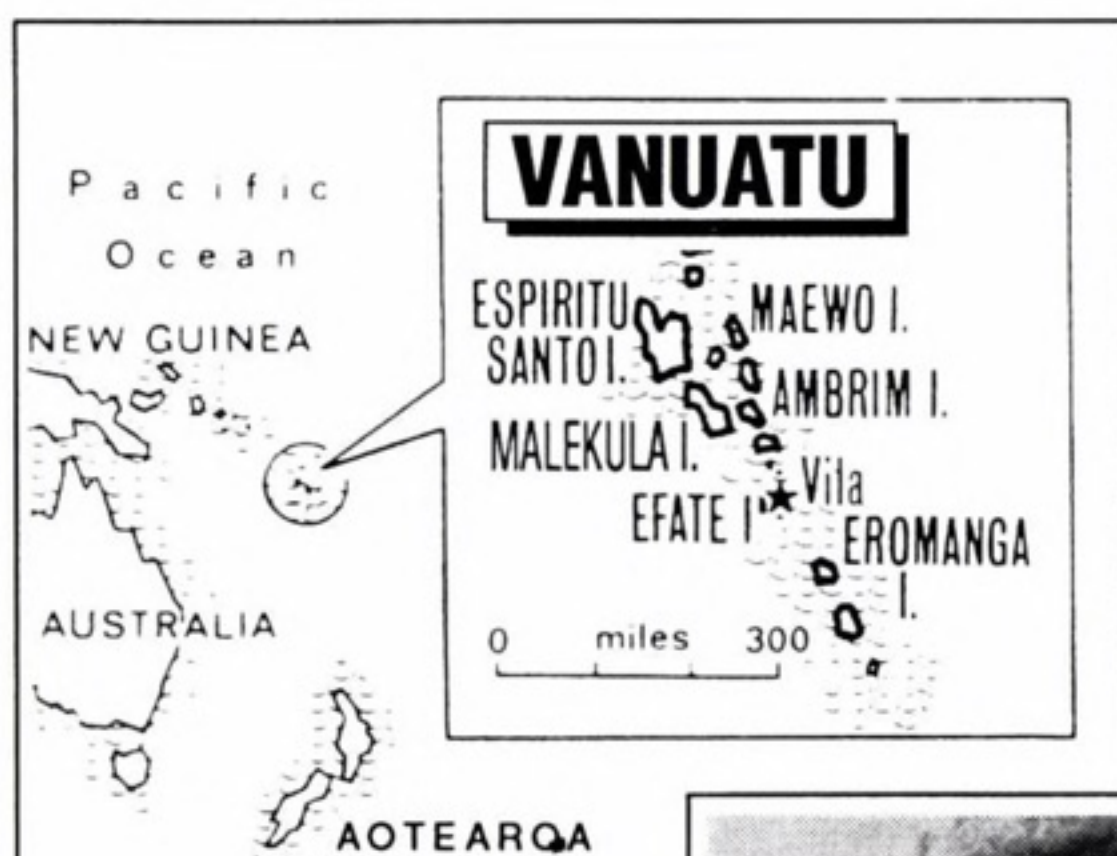
Vanuatu

PORT Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, is unlike the rest of the country. It is a sophisticated tax haven with *patisseries*, golf courses and international cuisine. Elsewhere, tropical forest covers dramatic volcanic topography. Most ni-Vanuatu live in coastal villages, only partially incorporated into the cash economy.

Vanuatu is one of the most culturally diverse nations of the world. Despite the widespread influence of missionaries (there is a church in almost every village), traditional beliefs and customs are strong.

On Tanna island, 'cargo-cult' followers of John Frum meet every year to await his return. Numerous stories surround this mythical man. During World War Two airstrips were cleared from the bush and houses built to store the 'cargo' he would bring – modern equipment, technology and other Western goods. John Frum has not yet come. But, in the words of one believer, 'people have waited 2,000 years for Christ, so we can wait a few more years for John.'

For 73 years the islands were ruled jointly by the British and the French in one of the most bizarre arrangements in colonial history. Under the joint



Condominium, nicknamed 'Pacific Pandemonium', neither colonial power had exclusive sovereignty. But nor did they want to be outdone by the other. So there were two post offices, two currencies, two sets of stamps, British schools and *lycées*. British and French flags, apparently, were raised to exact-

ly the same height at exactly the same time every day.

The legacy of competing foreign powers still lingers; with political parties and an education system divided along old colonial lines. The language barrier hampers co-operation within the nation's small but growing educated elite. Plans to

integrate English and French schools have met with little success.

Elections in December 1991 brought to power the first French-speaking Prime Minister, Maxime Carlot. After 11 years of government by Father Walter Lini, leader of the predominantly English-speaking Vanuaaku Pati (VP), Carlot has promised more jobs for French-speakers in the public service and wider use of the French language generally.

Vanuatu was the first nation to join the Campaign for an Independent and Nuclear Free Pacific. In the past, the Lini administration was outspoken in its support for independence movements in New Caledonia, East Timor and French Polynesia. But the new Prime Minister's interests are more closely allied with the French.

As a small and open economy, Vanuatu is heavily influenced by external events: commodity prices, foreign aid inflows, the number of tourist arrivals and damage caused by cyclones. The most cyclone-prone of all Pacific nations, Vanuatu experiences an average of one attack a year – upheavals which mirror the changes in the country.

Anna Buckley

AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★



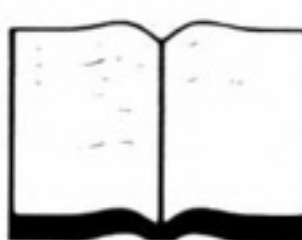
POLITICS

Western-style democracy.
Socialist since independence;
now more right-wing.



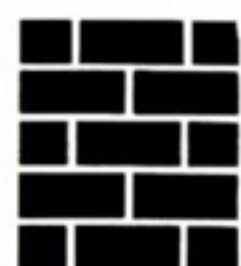
INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★

Good among ni-Vanuatu but expats
earn most of the country's wealth.



LITERACY ★★

Poor despite education
improvements since
independence.



SELF-RELIANCE ★

Aid inflows per capita ten times the
average for the developing world.



FREEDOM ★★★

Recent sacking of journalists
spoil an otherwise good
record.



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Improving slowly as educational
opportunities expand.



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★

65 years (US 76 years).
Malaria is main killer.

Leader Prime Minister Maxime Carlot

Economy GNP per capita: US \$860 (US \$20,910)

Monetary unit: Vatu

Main exports: Copra, fish re-exports, beef and cocoa.

Main imports: Machinery, transport equipment, food, live animals, basic manufactures, fuels, lubricants and chemicals.

Eighty per cent of the population work on small-holdings, growing coconuts, taro, bananas, sweet potatoes, fruit and vegetables, and raising pigs and poultry. Along with the plantations, they also produce copra and cocoa for export. Cattle and forestry are increasingly important foreign exchange earners.

People 159,000

Health Infant mortality 69 per 1,000 (US 9 per 1,000)

Culture Majority of people are Melanesian in origin, with another five per cent of European descent.

Language: Bislama (local pidgin dialect), English, French and many local languages.

Religion: 80 per cent Christian but animism is still prevalent and the cargo cult remains on Tanna island. Localised secessionist movements in some islands.

Sources: *The State of the World's Children*, 1992; *The Asia and Pacific Review*, 1991/1992; *World Bank Report*, 1992; information supplied by author.

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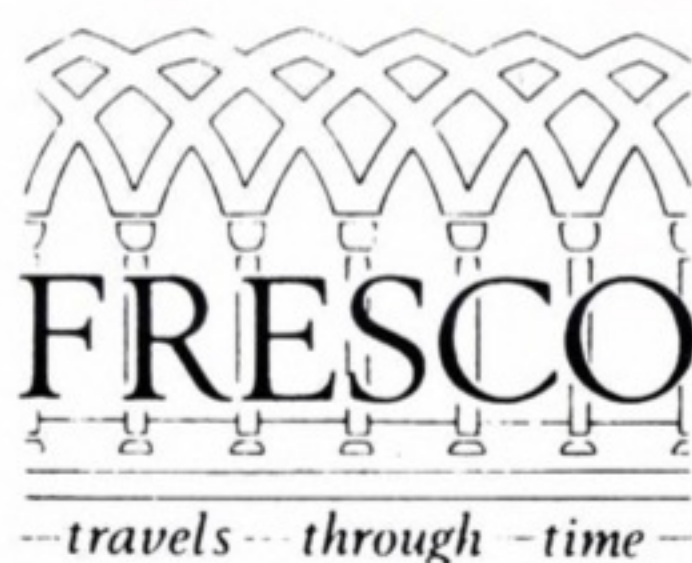
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